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**MARKETING RACE IN BRITISH HISTORY**  
**AN ANALYSIS OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE MARKETING BOARD POSTERS**  
**(1926-1933)**

by  
Jules Matthew Maffei

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of History  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
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Rowan University  
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Thesis Chair: Stephen G. Hague, Ph.D.

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## **Dedications**

This thesis and its research is dedicated to my family, not just for their endless support, but in admiration of their ability to be open minded when perceiving the world and its constantly evolving history.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge and thank all of my committee members who helped shape this academic pursuit. Specifically, my advisor, who helped spark an interest in British history that I previously did not know I had.

## **Abstract**

Jules Matthew Maffei

### **MARKETING RACE IN BRITISH HISTORY**

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE MARKETING BOARD POSTERS (1926-1933)**

2020-2021

Stephen G. Hague, Ph.D.

Master of Arts in History

Contemporary instances of racially charged product imagery are deeply intertwined with history. Products like “Aunt Jemima”, “Uncle Ben’s Rice”, or the indigenous peoples portrayed on “Land O’ Lakes” butter affects perception of race, class, and gender. The continued existence of these controversially branded products helps to construct attitudes about these subjects and demonstrates a societal acceptance of these as norms. The British Empire Marketing Board (EMB) represents an important historical example of the production of such racialized values. Between 1926 and 1933, the EMB created and disseminated marketing materials to promote intra-Empire trade. While the EMB was generally considered to have been a marketing failure, it was impactful in its presentation of an idealized vision of the British Empire and its colonial constituents. Namely, the EMB combined a complex medley of social ideas to present an elite white British male and his “nuclear family” as the Empire’s ideal subjects. To contextualize and provide conversation about these issues, this thesis examines the EMB’s “Buy Empire” posters. The EMB’s posters demonstrate that while their images portray efforts to encourage economic and cultural ties within the British Empire, the posters also cultivated attitudes towards class, gender, and particularly race. The appearance of these themes in government-produced propaganda highlights the attempt by the EMB to cement racially charged ideas into the fabric of British society and culture.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Selling Race, Class, and Gender**

For the longest time, the sight of “Aunt Jemima’s pancake mix”, “Uncle Ben’s Rice”, or the indigenous woman on the “Land O’ Lakes” butter were familiar and commonplace products in the American household. Yet in all of my upbringing, whether it be stocking hundreds of these products at the local grocer, or viewing adverts on television, there was never a need to stop and consider the message these products were condoning. Whether this was a failing of my own perception or on my American education, it would not be until these products started to disappear that a reality check was warranted. As it has become apparent over the last few decades, society has gradually begun to replace, remove, and reimagine these commercial marketing advertisements. In past years, societal aspirations were to move various products under these racially charged brandings. Despite efforts to remove these images, the messages they convey still continue to propagate on a world scale and are often reinforced through their purchasing. Ultimately, this begs the question of how these products became commonplace within society, as well as, whether or not this genre of products/advertising has had an effect in abetting a racialized culture, even if subliminally.

While “Land O’ Lakes” or “Uncle Ben’s Rice” are 21<sup>st</sup> century American examples, this kind of racialized marketing has a long history in a number of countries. One of the more telling examples existed with the Interwar period British Empire in the form of the Empire Marketing Board (EMB). During the EMB’s seven-year stint between 1926 through 1933, the EMB disseminated various promotional material to encourage

intra-Empire trade, as well produce an idealized vision of the British Empire and its constituents. The EMB expanded into various cultural realms. It produced films, lectures, radio talks, funded library institutions, and even cultivated a scientific research division.<sup>1</sup> These efforts aimed to advance trade within the Empire, as well as replace standard tariff reform and protectionist legislation.<sup>2</sup>

The EMB's production of Empire-themed posters under its "Buy Empire" campaign slogan depicted the clearest vision of its agendas and ideals. The EMB's poster adverts circulated throughout Britain by the millions, within the local press, shop window displays, and even highway displays. The posters were delivered to roughly 1700 different cities, 450 British cities and towns and even saw limited circulation in the colonies. The posters were marketed towards the average consumer, however, more often than not they portrayed an elite Briton.<sup>3</sup> The phrase "Buy Empire" was the key identifier in the EMB's goals. Every poster in some semblance promoted the purchasing of Empire products. However, in also presenting a vision of the British Empire's subjects, out of 222 uniquely illustrated posters, over half depicted overt themes of class and gender, but especially race.<sup>4</sup> This paper examines the Empire Marketing Board's posters to

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<sup>1</sup> The film unit led by John Grierson was one of the most famous facets of the EMB. They produced roughly one hundred different films that promoted colonies and colonial goods. A number of these films saw wide distribution across Britain. The department was so successful that after the EMB was closed, the department survived by being re-organized into the Crown Film Unit. Just like the EMB posters, the propaganda in these films promoted similar message that reinforced "Buy Empire". They also communicated to British constituents an idealized vision of the British Empire.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Hack, "Selling Empire." *OpenLearn*. The Open University, January 21, 2013. [https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/world-history/selling-empire-introduction?in\\_menu=32646](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/world-history/selling-empire-introduction?in_menu=32646).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, Karl Hack, "Selling Empire".

<sup>4</sup> Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain Stephen Tallents and the Birth of a Progressive Media Profession* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2012); Karl Hack, "Selling Empire."; "Empire Marketing Board Collections." *Manchester Art Gallery*, January 4, 2021. <https://manchesterartgallery.org/>; Stephen Constantine, *Buy and Build: the Advertising Posters of the Empire Marketing Board* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1986).

demonstrate that while its images portray efforts to encourage economic and cultural ties within the empire, the posters also cultivated attitudes towards class, gender, and particularly race. The appearance of these themes in government-produced propaganda highlights the attempt by the EMB to cement racially charged ideas into the fabric of British society and culture.

It is worth noting that these posters were created during the period between the two world wars, specifically 1926-1933. Concepts related to race, class, and gender, at the time were, by comparison, wildly different than what is now accepted in the 21st century. As a result, the EMB and its content were examined on the basis that the ideas promoted within its posters helped to create a society that on some level allowed for the EMB to convey beliefs about class, gender, and especially race, whether it overtly or subliminally. The sheer presence, volume, and continued production of these posters lends itself to its acceptance by the British population in the Interwar period.<sup>5</sup> As such, the research conducted largely left aside the economics of the EMB in order to focus on the themes demonstrated in its posters.

In order to depict an idealized British society, the Empire Marketing Board combined a complex medley of social ideas to present an elite white British male and his “nuclear family” as the Empire’s ideal subjects. Subsequently, any variation of people outside this vision were depicted as non-descript workers that were less able to reap the rewards of Empire. The EMB’s posters principally used concepts of race to demonstrate these differences in society. Other notions like class and gender were interwoven alongside race to reinforce these ideals. For example, one of the EMB posters titled

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<sup>5</sup> Karl Hack, “Selling Empire.”; “Empire Marketing Board Collections.” *Manchester Art Gallery*.

“Growing Markets For Our Goods” (Figure 1.) highlights these commonly shared themes in the EMB’s “Buy Empire” campaign.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “Growing Markets For Our Goods” *Empire Online*, April 7,  
<https://manchesterartgallery.org/collections/title/?mag-object-4321>

**Figure 1**

*“Growing Markets For Our Goods”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Edward McKnight Kauffer. Commissioned in 1927 and printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Maycock Cadle & Graham LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> “Growing Markets For Our Goods” *Empire Online*

The British Empire had existed since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and had operated as a collective series of territories under the jurisdiction of Britain's government. Throughout its lengthy history, the Empire experienced much growth and political, economic, social and cultural change. After World War One, Britain reached its territorial peak and extended its reach over roughly a quarter of the world's landmass. In every sense of the word, it was a global empire. Britain controlled a huge range of protectorates, territories, mandates, and dependent colonies, as well as "white settler" dominions after the First World War.<sup>8</sup> However, despite this seeming success, the advent of anti-colonial thought, decolonization, and general disinterest saw the emergence of cracks in the British Empire. As a result, during the Interwar period, government branded programs like the EMB worked to sustain the notions of Empire in numerous ways, whether through economic reform or through continuing how the Empire saw itself. For instance, while it was not overtly stated by the EMB, the board propagated specific ideas of class and gender, but especially race.<sup>9</sup>

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of race was understood in terms relating more to biological roots than how it is perceived in the present.<sup>10</sup> An individual's mental and

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<sup>8</sup> Dominions are former colonies or territories within the British Empire that had attained self-governing status by the British Empire. However, in these instances they were still allied to the British Empire. "White dominions" is a commonly referred to phrase that depicts entities whose populations largely consisted of a European descent. The majority of the EMB's posters depict colonies and dominions. They are usually not the "white dominions" of Canada, Australia, the Irish Free State, or New Zealand. When one of these "white dominions" is illustrated the posters focus on aspects such as landscapes, vacation destinations, and products (usually placed in other posters, i.e., Canadian cheese). The bulk of EMB posters separate individuals by binary representations of white Britons and black colonists. It is inferable that the EMB in this instance ignores the complexities of the British Empire in favor of supporting the notion that those in charge were white, British imperialists.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964* (Oxford, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Clare Hanson, *Eugenics, Literature and Culture in Post-War Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1-121

physical makeup were categorized by their respective ethnic origin. For instance, a black individual in Britain was associated with stereotypes of African peoples, as well as how Britain perceived the continent's populace. As a result of this thinking, various pseudo-scientific practices were popularized and accepted as fact. The most accepted of these was the now infamous study of eugenics and eugenic theory.<sup>11</sup> Eugenics argued that interracial relations were dangerous for the strength and security of the nation, in addition to the cohesion of the white British ethnicity. Other notions that aided in constructing ideas about race, class, and gender were the nationalistic beliefs commonly associated with imperialism.<sup>12</sup> In British imperial history, this placed the idealized British white male at the helm of the empire. Britain, like many other empires, created an idea of racial superiority when confronting colonies and foreign nations that it perceived as being less industrialized or culturally sophisticated.

Together, the construction of these ideals during the Interwar period helped to cultivate a racial culture under which programs like the EMB could thrive. The EMB also existed during an era of great social upheaval. After the First World War, many people sought answers to who they were and how they defined themselves within a nation. Britain and its subjects were no different.<sup>13</sup> In a time that followed government, nation, and border collapse, new ideological and political motives strove to identify who did and did not represent the standard citizen.<sup>14</sup> For the Empire-centric EMB, its actions became

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<sup>11</sup> Clare Hanson, *Eugenics*.

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance Africa and Britain, 1919-1945* (London: Routledge, 1999); Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: the Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1987); John Darwin, 'Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion', *English Historical Review*, June 1997.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (London: Bodley Head, 1965).

<sup>14</sup> Clare Hanson, *Eugenics, Literature and Culture in Post-War Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1-121; Marwick, *The Deluge*; Martin Pugh, *"We Danced All Night": a Social History of Britain between the Wars* (London: Vintage, 2009); Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*;

an effort to change these new dynamics of the Interwar period.<sup>15</sup> In order to do this, the EMB made careful efforts to deploy a conventional notion of Englishness, despite factors of anti-colonialism, decolonialization, and an emergent societal consciousness shaking faith in imperialism.<sup>16</sup> The EMB sent posters to school districts, posted them on roadsides, and displayed them in many entertainment and living spaces in mass volume for seven pivotal years.<sup>17</sup> As the EMB distributed its posters widely, it also played a significant role in constructing ideas about race in particular, as well as class and gender in British society.<sup>18</sup>

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Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918-1931* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Karl Hack, "Selling Empire."; Stephen Constantine, *Buy and Build: the Advertising Posters of the Empire Marketing Board* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964* (Oxford, 1993); Felicity Barnes, "Bringing Another Empire Alive? The Empire Marketing Board and the Construction of Dominion Identity, 1926-33." *Journal of imperial and Commonwealth history* 42, no. 1 (2014): 61–85; Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain*, 1-34.

<sup>17</sup> Karl Hack. "Selling Empire."

<sup>18</sup> "Empire Marketing Board Posters." *Empire Online*, April 7, 2021. <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk;> "Empire Marketing Board Collections." *Manchester Art Gallery*; Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain: Stephen Tallents and the Birth of a Progressive Media Profession* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).



## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### “Setting the Stage” - Social Change During the British Interwar Era

In order to confront and acknowledge the complex set of cultural and societal values that allowed for the Empire Marketing Board’s racially charged posters to appeal to Britons, one must look at the evolution of the British Empire, as well as racial attitudes found in Britain during this time. The complexity of this narrative had been documented by British historians over numerous decades. Studying their insights and findings as they had been published over time, charts a path in understanding how race, class, and gender have been perceived in British history.<sup>19</sup>

The First World War was a paradigm shifting event in terms of change to cultural, political, and social structures. As a result, this impact rendered a definitive consciousness for the British populace in terms of who could be considered a British citizen and what that had meant. For instance, Arthur Marwick provided one of the first important analyses of 1920s social change in *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*. Marwick details that the First World War conclusively changed every measure of British society. He contended that at the end of the war there was the emergence of a “business as usual” psychological approach by the masses. Although as the 1920s progressed, the status of labor improved, and previously marginalized

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<sup>19</sup> Deborah Hughes, *Contesting whiteness: Race, nationalism and British Empire exhibitions between the wars* (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008); Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Clare Hanson, *Eugenics, Literature and Culture in Post-War Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

demographics would see new opportunities for activism. He references the growing independence of women, as well as a many social changes in a positive light. The most important takeaway from Marwick's analysis is his recognition of institutional changes. Marwick argued that while not always immediately visible, the era allowed for new perspectives to be opened up to historically downtrodden groups.<sup>20</sup>

While numerous historians regard the presence of social change after the war, many disagree on how it occurred. Stephen Constantine contended that in the wake of the First World War the British Empire was at its peak.<sup>21</sup> Thus, with a new number of global resources and influence, the interwar period time saw a shift away from traditional roles in employment and social conditions to that of a more affluent, mass consumer society. In this, he steps away from popular conceptions of depression and economic decay, stating that despite pockets of economic struggle, Britain saw standards of social progress in family income, housing, and mortality rates. Despite advances, Constantine details that progress came with caveats. Class and regional inequalities were made even more transparent for those who could not rise above the poverty line. Constantine addresses these marginalized demographics of the poor as having particular difficulty with unemployment and proper levels of income.<sup>22</sup>

An integral facet of Interwar Britain's social atmosphere was the British Empire. While the British Empire had been found in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, its presence had lasting effects on perceptions of race, class, and gender. John Darwin's 1997 essay, "Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion", depicts a litany of the key

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<sup>20</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge : British Society and the First World War* (London: Bodley Head, 1965).

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Constantine. *Social Conditions in Britain 1918-1939* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1983), 1-46

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Constantine, *Social Conditions in Britain*.

notions that made up British expansionist efforts. He asserted that “British” identity was intertwined in the Empire’s early stages through its pursuit of exercising hegemony over wide swaths of territory. Darwin affirmed that despite the popular narratives of economic, military, and ideological British fronts, Britain was never capable of applying true hegemony over the world, or even for that matter, a fraction of the areas it controlled.<sup>23</sup> In Darwin’s later 2014 piece, he further expanded on these ideas.<sup>24</sup> Darwin detailed that as a result of key control points to showcase power, the Empire had been composed of half conquered lands, half stationed barracks, and half settled areas with little to no future plans. He reasoned that the result was an empire that consisted of clashing cultures and purposeless boundaries between people and races. In an effort to control this unrest, Darwin stated that London attempted to create a propaganda facade of control and peace over these troubled race and economic relations. However, Britain also had to make constant deals with elites, both black and white, in order to maintain its foreign influence. For instance, The workings of the Empire Marketing Board and its propagandistic posters espoused heavy themes of control and conformity to a unique vision of being “British”. In numerous EMB images, direct Empire control is seen in colonial representation, however, there is an equal representation of “cooperation” between British officials and foreign elites. Throughout these instances, the colonial individual is consistently depicted as black, whereas the British representative is a stark white.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> John Darwin, ‘Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion’, *English Historical Review*, June 1997.

<sup>24</sup> John Darwin, *The Empire Project the Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid; “Smoke Empire Tobacco” *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/44>  
 “Tobacco Plantation in South Rhodesia” *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/42>

To understand the role of British imperialism, it is also imperative to understand efforts against it. The concepts of anti-colonialism and decolonization represented the rejection of Empire and British imperialism. In 1993, Stephen Howe's book detailed the effects of British anticolonialism and the complex emotional response it represented regarding Empire and its peoples.<sup>26</sup> As Howe depicts, at the conclusion of the First World War and throughout the Interwar Period, anticolonialism thought oversaw significant hikes at a global level. Howe argues that in the past rapid colonial developments were seen as critical for policy makers. In this, there was a deep-rooted belief that British intervention was entirely beneficial to the colonial subjects, in addition to being indispensable for the foundation of their own political development. Howe counters this argument by proposing that from its onset, colonialism was a continual tactic for Britain to escape financial crisis. Howe further noted that, British economic decline could be correlated with that of imperial withdrawal. He explores this by detailing that these feelings of anti-colonialism within Britain arose out of belief in national weakness and insecurity, the same reasons that previously motivated colonial expansion. The cultivation of these attitudes illustrates a rejection of imperial expansion, but also of racially biased colonial intervention.<sup>27</sup>

Considering this, rejection of Empire through anticolonialism was only one ideological movement to gain traction during the Interwar Period. In 1978, Edward Said effectively established the term Orientalism in order to depict western societies' perception of individuals who reside within the East.<sup>28</sup> The East generally refers to North

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<sup>26</sup> Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*.

<sup>28</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 1-38.

Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, all areas where the British Empire exercised control or considerable influence. In essence, Said's focus on the term "Orientalism" refers to the flawed cultural representation that constitutes Western thought of the Middle East. While Said's focuses on the French, as well as, the British Empire, Said contends that for both empires, the primary component that defined their empires into the 1920s was a distinct separation of identity based on race.<sup>29</sup>

In his follow up work, *Culture and Imperialism*, Said examines the connections between culture produced during the time and how imperialist agendas had an unquestionable influence upon it.. Said effectively depicts that one did not have to be a member of the aristocracy, ruling elite, or enterprising magnate to be colored by the ongoings of the empire. If culture and imperialism are intertwined, as he argues, everyone is susceptible to the beliefs and perceptions it espouses. In many ways, his work mirrors the beliefs reflected in the Empire Marketing Board posters, particularly its colonial imagery. The EMB sought to depict foreignness and the varied culture of Britain's Empire to its people. However, the EMB's representation of "culture" would consequently be shadowed by omnipresent visuals of Empire and Imperialism.<sup>30</sup>

Said's influential work inspired others to write on similar topics of race, class, and gender as it was intertwined with Empire and Imperialism. Famously, Paul Gilroy's 1987 piece, *There Ain't No Black In The Union Jack*, focuses on the intricacies of ethnocentrism and its relationship with British nationalism that historians like Stephen

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<sup>29</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*.

<sup>30</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. (London: Vintage Books, 1994); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*.

"Colombo, Ceylon" Empire Online, April 7, 2021.<https://www-empire-andigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/2>

Howe provide less detail on.<sup>31</sup> Gilroy's work breaches traditional academia as its nature is a formal charge against racism and the individuals who allowed for it to go unrecognized in the political and scholarly sectors. Gilroy spends a great deal of time delving into criminalization, anti-racism, policing, and the delicate relationship between race and class. His work looks at the effects of institutionalized racism and the qualifiers of what makes someone a British subject in the eyes of the masses. Gilroy's efforts are some of the first major outspoken recognition of these inequalities in British Interwar period academia. As such, Gilroy's efforts contextualize a number of the attitudes surrounding Britain's and race during the Interwar Period. Furthermore, his documentation that academia had underplayed the topic of race well into the 1980s aids in depicting why there has been little to no analyses on the more loaded concepts within the EMB posters. The EMB in numerous instances purposefully depicts its characters in terms of race, class, and gender. Subsequently, British officials and noteworthy citizens are often represented as solely white upper class male elites. Just as Gilroy suggests in his focus on race and class, anyone within these EMB depictions that was outside of this strict vision of Empire would be excluded or marginalized.<sup>32</sup>

Expounding on the notions put forth in Gilroy's work, published in 1999, Barbara Bush's work, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance Africa and Britain, 1919-1945*, focuses on the British Empire and its involvement in the world showcase, however, her work examines in detail the intricacies of race relations. Bush's work differs from previous concepts in its adherence to colonial ties, gender, and the cultural implications of the British Empire. Her work examines both British and African perspectives within each

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<sup>31</sup> Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, 43-71; Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism*.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*.

country to consider the cultivation of different ideals and perceptions of one another. For example, she contends that propaganda efforts from British institutions cultivated ideas of a lack of civilization and a sense of rugged adventure. Thus, as a result of these social tensions, white individuals in Britain overwhelmingly did not believe that colonists possessed the ability to self-rule without assistance. These are frequent visuals that can be seen in the Empire Marketing Board posters. In varied imagery, colonists and British individuals are divided by color, wealth, and a sense of industrialization. When a white British male is not the center of the illustration, they are made visible to viewers through their overt exploration specific garb and leadership roles.<sup>33</sup>

Edward Said contended that race was fundamental in constructing Orientalism and its study. Bush and Gilroy argued similar as they examined race in terms of black and white British citizens.<sup>34</sup> Tony Ballantyne decidedly argues that the concept of Aryanism had also played a significant role for bringing the British Empire under one ideology.<sup>35</sup> Aryanism, which holds itself as a racial supremacy view that the Aryan race, being the original speakers of the Indo-European languages, and a substantial subrace of Caucasians, were superior to other races. This view would have, according to Ballantyne, existed largely until the 1920s, where the ideology fell out of favor in exchange for a level of racial inclusiveness. At the conclusion of the First World War, the conflict brought a heavy hitting destruction to both a human life force and the driving notions of

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<sup>33</sup> Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance Africa and Britain, 1919-1945* (London :: Routledge, 1999); Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*; "East-African Transport ~ New Style" Empire Online, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/6>

<sup>34</sup> Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*; Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*; Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*.

<sup>35</sup> Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1-18.

society. Due to this, Ballantyne finds that British views coinciding with emerging left leaning political beliefs, such as anti-colonialism, oversaw the de-escalation of Aryan supremacy beliefs.<sup>36</sup> Similar to some of the other aforementioned historians, Ballantyne's theory is unique as it places Aryanism as the primary race component to driving forces for British perceptions of its empire and the world. However, as depicted by other historians, it is observable that race perceptions were multi-faceted and relied on a complex structure of elements such as differing class hierarchies, varied racial groups, and gender differences that together form systems of discrimination.<sup>37</sup>

While the majority of historians examined here contend that British Imperialism was structured around race, others like David Cannadine would postulate otherwise. Cannadine's work *Ornamentalism: How The British Saw Their Empire*, offers a distinct analysis by contending that class, as opposed to race, carried more weight in structuring society. By this, Cannadine expresses that social hierarchy and where one stood in its echelon, both for British and colonial subjects, was what determined perceptions of one another. Therefore, Cannadine contends that the British Empire was less so a political establishment as it was instead a social institution. While race absolutely played a role in how British subjects compared themselves to indigenous colonists, it was an aspiring middle class that defined power. In this, Cannadine argues that the larger and more extended the British Empire had become it was status that meant the most in terms of being British. In alignment with the views of Bush and Darwin, Cannadine found that in order for Britain to maintain its empire, it had to rely on local elites. Only by doing so

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<sup>36</sup> Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race*, 1-19, 181-185.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid; Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*; Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*; Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*.



could an empire established on export/import trade flourish. Rather while race may have played a subliminal role, it can be inferred that class status, possession, and wealth, were the primary factor that dominated British individuals' views when comparing themselves to colonists. This view is made especially prominent in Empire Marketing Board posters that depicted individuals in Britain. In these adverts, a high level of importance is placed on the sustaining the economy through purchasing of Empire goods.<sup>38</sup>

Another major debate amongst imperial historians is the timing and influence of the Empire on British society. In 2007, Bernard Porter's *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* famously generated the view that in actuality, British subjects who lived within Britain were not cognizant of the empire and its ongoing in any matter of importance. In this, Porter contends that this view is largely related to class distinctions. Porter refers to a more traditional, upper echelon ruling class that very much cared about the empire and its ongoing. For these ruling individuals, empire was the sustenance of economics and political function. However, for the middle class and poor constituents, empire mattered very little to them. It was a presence and nationalist role that had always been omnipresent, however, if it did not directly affect them, it did not concern their lives. In fact, Porter concludes that if anything, middle- and working-class structures were even hostile to an empire that carried with it heavy financial restrictions. People of these classes were more interested in issues that affected the home front. This could be the result of wages, trade unions, and that of working circumstances. This view, according to Porter, was carried through even when the empire was interested in promoting its basis,

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<sup>38</sup> David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*.

"Buy Empire Every Day" Empire Online, April 7, <https://www-empire-amd.igal-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/10>

whether it be the Empire Marketing Boards, British Empire Exhibition and the time of “New Imperialism” during the late and early 19th and 20th centuries. Propaganda, as Porter claims would have had little effect on these people, Britain would have been an empire, but the people themselves were not imperialistic. In considering Porter’s point, a number of interesting thoughts are raised in highlighting other historians’ inputs on class as defining Britain, its perspectives, and its empire. However, Porter’s views disregard a number of claims as being inconsequential, primarily the effect of propaganda, nationalism under an imperial banner, and race as it related to British influence. Under Porter’s views the effects of colonialism and race would have been minimal in British interwar history. While controversial to say the least, Porter’s views hold merit and add important discussion to the contemporary call for widening the content that is studied by British historians.<sup>39</sup>

For some historians like John M. Mackenzie, the views expressed by Porter appeared outlandish and inaccurate. In turn, the retorts by Mackenzie, and subsequent responses by Bernard Porter are important to consider as they divided British Imperialism studies into two differing camps. Each side argued about the timing and influence of Empire in Britain, and who actually cared about the Empire. Porter contended there was little evidence to support the common Briton was involved or paid much attention to the Empire. Whereas historians like Mackenzie illustrated that due to the sheer omnipresence of Empire, the people were involved or at least acknowledged its existence.<sup>40</sup> In terms of

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<sup>39</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>40</sup> John McAleer, and John M. MacKenzie. *Exhibiting the Empire: Cultures of Display and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); John M. Mackenzie “‘Comfort’ and Conviction: A Response to Bernard Porter.” *Taylor & Francis*, December 8, 2008. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03086530802561040>; Bernard Porter, *The Absent-*

the Empire Marketing Board, this discussion on Imperial history is integral as it examines the potential of the EMB's posters to affect Britain's populace. While there may never be a quantifiable means to suggest how the posters were received, the continued mass publication of such imagery suggests a considerable resonance between the public and the Empire.<sup>41</sup> The research presented here reinforces the arguments of Mackenzie. The EMB and its posters signify evidence of an imperial culture that was omnipresent in the lives of British citizens. Even if the Empire did not affect the British layman day to day, they would have at least been aware of it, and potentially susceptible to its messaging and influences. The mass production of the EMB posters, in addition to the medley of other mediums it produced aid in signifying this stance.

The Porter-Mackenzie debate questioned the methods and roles of British imperial historians, who contributed further perspectives, whether agreeing with Porter's exaggerated empire influence thesis or Mackenzie's depiction of a culture indoctrinated by the influence of empire. Ashley Jackson, for example, in his *Mad Dogs and Englishmen: A Grand Tour of The British Empire at Its Height 1850-1945*, inexplicitly contributed to 2009 a profound text on the influence of British Empire.<sup>42</sup> Jackson centers his piece around the ideology that a single piece of imagery can draw a multitude of thoughts and words. Jackson makes the claim that the British Empire was one of the most influential and extensive entities in the world. Their ability to provide pervasive imagery circulated the globe and left lasting impressions that depict the realities of the world

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*Minded Imperialists*. Bernard Porter, "Further Thoughts on Imperial Absent-Mindedness." *Taylor & Francis*, April 1, 2008. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03086530801889400>.

<sup>41</sup> Karl Hack. "Selling Empire"; Stephen Constantine. *Buy and Build*.

<sup>42</sup> Ashley Jackson, *Mad Dogs and Englishmen: a Grand Tour of the British Empire at Its Height 1850-1945* (London: Quercus, 2009).

during its rule, often unabashedly, brutal, and racist in nature. Whether or not, this imagery ultimately mattered to British subjects during the era is worthy of debate, however, the imagery provided by Jackson attests to the near omnipresence of empire within their lives. The wide circulation of the Empire Marketing Board images in this research is further reinforced by Jackson's volume of evidence. In particular he covers British actions in Africa and colonialism that are separate from the imagery of the EMB. To this end, it is inferable that the perpetual recreation of British propaganda in nearly every medium would have had a lasting effect, either directly or subliminally. Regardless of the Empire's beliefs on race, class, and gender, the upholding of imperial tinged values was made visible on a global scale. In this sense, it is difficult to doubt lack of Empire awareness for the average British subjects.<sup>43</sup>

As the pressing of the Porter-Mackenzie debate spurred historians to write about the presence that empire had on the lives of British subjects, historians like Martin Pugh, Susan D. Pennybacker, and Richard Overy waged their own debate on how to interpret the Interwar period. Martin Pugh's for instance demonstrates that the nature of Empire is misrepresented. Pugh postulates that Britain during the Interwar Period is often seen as being consumed by mass unemployment, class disunity, strikes, protests, and populated by unsympathetic policy makers who dabbled in right-wing tendencies. However, he asserts the 1930s oversaw the rise of a modern consumer society, and that while there were improvements to be made to all of these new societal features, the Interwar Period saw them established. Pugh contended that what mattered to people were the progress and ambitions they could directly achieve in their lives. Pugh's greatest two flaws are his

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<sup>43</sup> Ashley Jackson, *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*; Mackenzie, John M. Mackenzie, "'Comfort' and Conviction"; Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialist*.

relative neglect of the role that race played during this period. New middle- and upper-class homeowners may have had access to a large array of new options, but this did not mean that it applied to everyone. Secondly, Pugh's vision of interwar Britain is one curiously fixated on the aristocracy, a group who would have certainly enjoyed many of the Empire benefits made available to the public during this period.<sup>44</sup> Effectively, Pugh's work does what many do not, it challenges the popular and widely accepted realities of a period and its ongoing. For this, his work is acknowledged as being principal in its own right. Works like Pugh's unintentionally highlight the inequalities in race, class, and gender that would have been further established with the formation of an exclusive, notably white, modern consumer society.<sup>45</sup>

Conversely, Susan D. Pennybacker argued for an Interwar period afflicted with social problems.<sup>46</sup> In fact, Pennybacker detailed that race was at center of British Imperial actions. Through the analysis of activists who lived during the 1930s, Pennybacker finds that systemic racism related to the British government and subsequently, the British Empire would have mattered to infringed and marginalized demographics, even if they were not actively conscious of it. Pennybacker differs in the groups she centers on. Her work considers the individuals that made up political networks such as the antiracist, antifascist, and anti-imperialist left leaning groups of the era. Through this, Pennybacker is able to highlight how activists decidedly stood for their beliefs. As well as demonstrate

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<sup>44</sup> David Cannadine. *Ornamentalism*, 85-152.

<sup>45</sup> Martin Pugh, *"We Danced All Night"*.

<sup>46</sup> Susan Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Munich. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

that even if these groups were the vocal minority, their outspoken issues gave credence to the realities affecting the unspoken majority.<sup>47</sup>

Historians such as Pugh depicted the Interwar Period as being less a depressing era and instead more optimistic and filled with advance. Whereas Pennybacker saw that while some enjoyed the social advances that occurred during the period, there were also many that were excluded from these benefits. Richard Overy differs as he effectively sees the theme of this era as one surrounded by the concept of morbidity.<sup>48</sup> Overy contends that the British Empire, specifically, England, was fixated on rising concepts of savagery and atrocity. He likens these notions to the economic disintegration seen by the Great Depression, as well as surging fears of a new war near the end of the era. While he does not deeply analyze the concepts of race, class, gender, or even the British Empire to that extent, his thoughts are unique and original on the Interwar Period's themes. Adding these combined ideas to the perspectives of Pennybacker and Pugh, gives a more complete, albeit complex view of the Interwar Period. These works aid significantly in understanding individuals who lived during the time, such as those who would create the Empire Marketing Board or the constituents that viewed its products.<sup>49</sup>

In following the ripples of Porter-Mackenzie debate, important contemporary works regarding the British Empire and its constituents soon surfaced. These works would prove distinct from previous Empire entries in their analysis of the Empire's worth when judged by its people. Andrew S. Thompson's contemporary book *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century*

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<sup>47</sup> Susan Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich*

<sup>48</sup> Richard Overy, *The Twilight Years: the Paradox of Britain between the Wars* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid; Martin Pugh, "We Danced All Night"; Susan D. Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich*.

centers itself on precisely this view. Thompson's take on British imperialism and its subjects is measured in two important viewpoints. British subjects believed the empire was involved in every manner of society. However, they also believed themselves to be unaffected by the Empire. As a result, most did not remiss its eventual departure. At the culmination of his work, Thompson found that British subjects both cared about the disintegration of the empire, and at the same time were unaffected by it. While it is entirely likely that the lower middle class was the least likely to be emotionally connected to the empire, it was also found that there were individuals amongst society's upper-class structure that cared about the Empire's profitability. This belief affirms the stances taken by Cannadine, as well as the Empire Marketing Boards recurring theme of goods directed at upper class individuals. If an upper echelon populace had vested economic interest in the Empire and its goals, it is feasible that they would also believe the purported realities demonstrated in the Empire's commercial propaganda.<sup>50</sup>

While contemporary historians have debated whether the large majority of British individuals cared about the British Empire, this did not mean that perceptions of Britain and Britain's perceptions of race were not affected by the toils of empire. From a more contemporary outlook, Antoinette M. Burton has devoted enormous effort to illustrate that British histories are written to underplay the effects of British involvement in creating colonial dissent and disorder. In this, Burton details that British interference in foreign affairs, affected the world in a myriad of ways. This could take the form of judgement, personal bias, or racial tension. She cites perception altering examples of

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century*; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 85-152; "Buy Empire Every Day" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/10>

white dominance in the Berlin Conference, the African cake-carving ceremony, all the way to Britain's Interwar Period control over defense and foreign policy. In essence, Burton detailed that Britain left permanent legacies in the historical narratives of many populaces. To what degree this may have directly affected British homeland subjects is worthy of debate. However, a persistent historical accounting of white supremacy that historians like Barbara Bush and Tony Ballantyne also account for denotes the subliminal influence of empire and nationalism on colonial peoples.<sup>51</sup>

Despite this vast literature on Empire, far less scholarship exists on the Empire Marketing Board itself. Analysis of the EMB largely relates to economic pursuits, efforts to market Empire, or detailed individual histories. For instance, an economic analysis by David Higgins documents the underpinnings of trade and why the EMB failed to meet desires.<sup>52</sup> Whereas other examples like a study done by Ashley Brower examine how the EMB was an effort to conceal the cracks in diminishing Empire philosophy.<sup>53</sup> Out of works done on the EMB, only two detail the logic of those who ran the organization. William Roger Louis's, *In the Name of God, Go! Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill* and Scott Anthony's *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain: Stephen Tallents and The Birth of a Progressive Media profession* provide

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<sup>51</sup> Antoinette M. Burton, *The Trouble with Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017); Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*; Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race*.

<sup>52</sup> David Higgins, and Brian Varian. "The Economic Failure of Britain's Empire Marketing Board." VOX, *CEPR Policy Portal*, April 27, 2019. <https://voxeu.org/article/economic-failure-britain-s-empire-marketing-board>.

<sup>53</sup> Ashley Kristen Bower, "Rebranding Empire: Consumers, Commodities, and the Empire Marketing Board, 1926-1933 ." *PDXScholar* , September 1, 2020. [https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6469&context=open\\_access\\_etds](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6469&context=open_access_etds).



detailed histories of individuals who ran the EMB. While these histories do not analyze race, class, and gender, the insight provided on who made up the EMB is invaluable.<sup>54</sup>

William Roger Louis's work follows the life of Leo Amery, the president, founder, and mastermind behind the EMB. *In the Name of God, Go!* presents Leo Amery as one of the primary British Imperialists of his day. Louis depicts to viewers that Amery was a complex man who was progressive at times and staunchly imperial at others. He notes that Amery played important political roles in helping evolve the British Empire and the Commonwealth. While some information is provided relating to the formation of the EMB, it is the presentation of Leo Amery and his character that can be seen as molding the EMB's values. When viewing the EMB's posters, particularly those relating to foreign affairs, a large majority of them present the colonies as governing themselves (despite being aided by Britain's). This amongst other details are representative of Amery's situational beliefs.<sup>55</sup>

More recently, Scott Anthony's work largely focused on the subject of public relations and how it was formed in Britain. He does this by closely following the career of Sir Stephen Tallents, the first and only secretary to the EMB. While his work only spends a chapter detailing Stephen Tallent's time in the EMB, Anthony allows for viewers to glimpse into Tallents decision making and thought processes during his time there. This is integral information due to the fact that Stephen Tallents was in charge of commissioning and setting up illustrators to create the specific "Buy Empire" posters.

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<sup>54</sup> Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain: Stephen Tallents and the Birth of a Progressive Media Profession* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); William Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!: Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill* (New York etc.: Norton, 1992).

<sup>55</sup> William Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!*

Anthony find's Tallents as a dedicated civil servant who became a public sector entrepreneur. He was both a nationalistic man, but also somewhat progressive in his own right. However, his adherence to the institutions he worked for represented his views until after the EMB.<sup>56</sup> Both of these individuals would effectively run the EMB. Understanding the decisions made by these individuals throughout their lives, as well as their outlook on the Interwar Period is fundamental to examining the EMB posters.

Ultimately, to analyze and understand the debates and arguments of British histories leading up to and during 1918 to 1939 is critical in analyzing the complex intricacies of race and its intermingling with economic, political, and social functions. This is particularly the case as the thresholds of empire came to a crawl during the Interwar Period. While it is not likely the Empire would have been the center of political, social, and economic realities for a lower/middle class, Empire would have mattered for those above this level. The Empire Marketing Board was oriented to reinforce the receding ideals of imperialism, however, it was also geared to appeal to this upper level of society. This is made evident by its illustrators who commonly feature upper class white British families. When these individuals are not present, the EMB presents a view of a frequently black, impoverished foreigner toiling away for the Empire. The British Empire may not have mattered for everyone, but its expansive size, economic pursuits, and politics of oppression, assured that its agendas would permeate society. This was done so successfully that even after having thoroughly surveyed the EMB's history, as well as British imperial histories, the EMB's more loaded posters are talked about, but

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56 Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*, 1-29.

only for their presence in the Empire's economics.<sup>57</sup> Race, class, and gender have yet to be thoroughly analyzed in the EMB or its posters. The research presented here aims to rectify this historiographical hole by presenting that the EMB posters, while directed at encouraging economic development, cultivated attitudes towards class, gender, and particularly race.

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<sup>57</sup> Antoinette M. Burton, *The Trouble with Empire*; Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*; Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race*; Karl Hack. "Selling Empire."; "Empire Marketing Board Collections." *Manchester Art Gallery*; Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*; William Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!*.

## Chapter 3

### The Empire Marketing Board

#### Reinforcing The British Empire Through Propaganda

Amidst the changing social and class dynamics of the British Interwar period, the British Empire remained at its territorial culmination while suffering economic strain. During this era, these strains largely related to tariffs, Britain's relations with colonies, reputation of the Empire, and of course the Empire's profitability.<sup>58</sup> All of these factors were highly influential in creating the Empire Marketing Board, as well as the direction pursued in some of its more socially loaded posters. This chapter will document the key players, their aspirations, and the societal influences that led to the creation of the EMB. To do so will enable one to view the posters, not for their surface value imagery alone, but for a more enhanced view as to how it constructed attitudes on race, class, and gender.

Between 1926 to 1933, the Empire Marketing Board oversaw efforts to encourage intra-Empire trade, in addition to remedying the economic concerns surrounding protectionist legislation and tariff reform. Its marketed slogan of "Buy Empire" was splashed over every facet of its products, branches, and programs.<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, the efforts of the EMB were scrapped in favor of new economic systems. By contemporary analysis, the EMB was even deemed a failure in its ability to successfully raise trade.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> John Darwin, *The Empire Project*; Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*; William Collins, and Hugh Gunn. "The British Empire: A Survey." : *Political Science Quarterly*. JSTOR, June 1925. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2142277.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen Constantine, *Buy and Build*.

<sup>60</sup> David Higgins, and Brian Varian. "The Economic Failure of Britain's Empire Marketing Board." *VOX, CEPR Policy Portal*.

However, during its short existence, the EMB distributed posters to Britain, her colonies, trade partners, and neighbors in sizable volume.

Over the course of British history, having citizens become involved with the Empire in order to promote trade was not an uncommon prospect.<sup>61</sup> Even during the Interwar Period, the EMB was not the first of the British government's efforts to interweave the omnipresence of its Empire with the daily affairs of its people. Prior to the creation of the Empire Marketing Board, the British Empire Exhibition (BEE) was held in England from April 23rd, 1924 to October 31st, 1925.<sup>62</sup> The EMB mirrored by this immediate predecessor in many ways, especially in representations of race, class, and gender. The BEE was an Empire campaign that had nationalism and propaganda at its heart. Both, the BEE and the EMB highlighted the importance of the Empire, as well as covered the surfacing cracks in imperial relationships.<sup>63</sup>

The BEE was proposed to stimulate Dominion and foreign governing relationships with the Empire, bolster trade, as well as represent British distinction at home and abroad. The British government marked Wembley Park as the central location to construct the BEE. In 1920, two years after the end of the First World War, British politicians felt that various governing entities were challenging British rule and its naval supremacy.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, the British Empire had begun to see economic turmoil in both

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<sup>61</sup> Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, Ch. 2 Socialism and Empire Before 1939; John Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 59-470.

<sup>62</sup> Daniel Stephen, *The Empire of Progress: West Africans, Indians, and Britons at the British Empire Exhibition 1924-25* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.) 1-22.

<sup>63</sup> Felicity Barnes, "Bringing Another Empire Alive?" *The Empire Marketing Board and the Construction of Dominion Identity, 1926-33.* *Journal of imperial and Commonwealth history* 42, no. 1 (2014): 61-85.; Deborah Hughes. *Contesting whiteness*; John McAleer, and John M. MacKenzie. *Exhibiting the Empire.*; Daniel Stephen, *The Empire of Progress*

<sup>64</sup> "The Washington Naval Treaty ." Library of Congress, February 6, 1922.  
<https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000002-0351.pdf>.

its trade, homeland, and governing territories prior to the Great Depression.<sup>65</sup> On the 23rd of April 1924 on Saint George's Day, King George V held an opening ceremony for the BEE, which was transmitted by the BBC Radio and delivered via telegram around the world.<sup>66</sup> At its onset, 56 out of the 58 British held territories participated and held unique pavilions and displays, Gibraltar, Gambia, and the Irish Free State excluding. The BEE supplied a wealth of entertainment in the form of events, attractions, and exhibits. Each held at its center a celebration of propagandistic belief and support of the Empire. The British Empire Exhibition oversaw 18 million visitors in 1924, however, failed to break even in raising money. In two years, it held 27 million visitors and cost the British government approximately £70 million. The American media company, *Variety* even dubbed it the world's biggest outdoor failure.<sup>67</sup> The BEE may not have been economically fruitful, however, it was more than successful in operating as a propaganda exhibit. In this sense, the BEE was identical to the EMB. The BEE's efforts to promote propaganda were often through physical means (i.e., posters, pamphlets, etc.) and as such, would continue to advertise its messages long after the convention ended. To date, adverts released by the BEE are visible and easily ascertained.<sup>68</sup>

Just as the EMB released posters to market its ideals, the BEE also produced its own variant, albeit less aggressively. While there might not be a direct correlation between the two, the striking text and vibrant colors are a feature shared in the BEE and

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<sup>65</sup> Daniel Stephen, *The Empire of Progress*, 1-22.

<sup>66</sup> Geoffrey Hewlett, *A History of Wembley* (London: Brent Library Service, 1979.) P. 176.

<sup>67</sup> "Variety (August 1926) : Variety : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming." *Internet Archive*. New York, NY: Variety Publishing Company, January 1, 1970. <https://archive.org/details/variety84-1926-08/page/n207/mode/1up?view=theater>.

<sup>68</sup> Deborah Hughes. *Contesting whiteness*; Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*; Geoffrey Hewlett, *A History of Wembley*.

EMB posters. Furthermore, when human figures appear in the BEE posters, British subjects are consistently portrayed as white. On the other hand, colonial subjects are always dark skin colored if not an extreme dark black. These individuals are purposefully drawn attractively and bear a number of exaggerated features. In this sense, BEE's marketing campaign are extremely similar to that of the EMB, particularly in its representation of race.<sup>69</sup>

An ideal example of this is available in Spencer Pryse's illustration to promote the BEE in 1924 (Figure 2.). The illustration is part of the "Scenes of Empire Series" and depicts non-descript colonial denizens harvesting an array of trade resources. All of the humans viewable are the same uniform black, with the exception of the two women who are slightly "lighter" in skin color. The men visible are drawn garishly and brutish. They are large, overweight individuals that are drawn un-attractively with the exception of muscular arms. Two of which are seen lurching over one another to talk to one of the women present. The intention seems to evoke a semblance of lower intelligence. The two "lighter" black women have soft features that are not as overt as the men. The British illustrator, Spencer Pryse, illustrated a number of similarly themed foreign depictions for the EMB.<sup>70</sup> Notably, much like a number of artists for the EMB, Pryse's depictions of "the colonies" at the BEE were done a year before his travels to Morocco in 1925.<sup>71</sup> Effectively, while the large majority of the BEE's posters did not showcase people, when they were present, a distinctive correlation between race and levels of societal affluence

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<sup>69</sup> "British Empire Exhibition Advertisements.", National Maritime Museum. Accessed April 8, 2021. <https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/201619.html>.

<sup>70</sup> "Gathering Cocoa Pods" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/18>

<sup>71</sup> While I could not find a digitized source, apparently Spencer Pryse wrote an article on his time in Morocco. He did so in a magazine titled "Blackwood" No. MCCCXX, Vol. CCXVIII. By the time of the magazine publication in 1925, Pryse would have already published his work for the BEE.

was made apparent. This valuing of British citizenship is made all the more clear in the BEE's degraded appearance of colonial citizens when compared to the culturally and industrially "evolved" portrayal of white British subjects.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> "British Empire Exhibition Advertisements.", *British Empire Exhibition, 1924*.



**Figure 2**

*“British Empire Exhibition”*



*Note.* British Empire Exhibition – by Gerald Spencer Pryse. Commissioned in 1924 and printed by the Vincent Brooks Day & Son LTD in London. Image Archived at the National Maritime Museum.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>73</sup> “British Empire Exhibition Advertisements.”, *British Empire Exhibition*, 1924.

Aside from direct and indirect similarities in the government's British Empire Exhibition, the event proved a massive influence for the later EMB. Leo Amery, who had visited the former exhibition was reportedly impressed by its efforts. Amery was a British Conservative party politician, journalist, and served as Britain's Colonial Secretary (Secretary of State for the Colonies). Amery played a critical role as chairman and creator of the Empire Marketing Board.<sup>74</sup>

Throughout his career, Amery had been fixated on British India, the progress of the British Empire, military preparedness, and stiff resistance to international appeasement. A variety of these British nationalist qualities were directly infused into the EMB and made visible in its posters and other content. Amery held the position of Colonial Secretary from October 1922 to January 1924, during which he was responsible for leading the EMB and its actions.<sup>75</sup> Under his guidance, as well as, through an array of pivotal members, Amery's EMB implemented many of the celebrated imperial ideals from the British Empire Exhibition onto a wider, arguably more visible scale. By examining Amery's role as chairman of the EMB, his political career, and personality, it is possible to correlate how and why the EMB was created and what it aimed to achieve.<sup>76</sup>

Considering that a large variety of the EMB's "Buy Empire" posters painted the colonies and its constituents as brutish and unindustrialized, it is perhaps ironic that Amery's early life was based outside of British mainland, both physically and culturally.

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<sup>74</sup> William Collins, and Hugh Gunn. "The British Empire: A Survey", foreword. The British Empire: A Survey is a 12-volume series of books written by William Collins at the request of the British Empire Exhibition. In its foreword there is a passing mention of Leo Amery and his attendance at the exhibition.

<sup>75</sup> Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries (Vol II)* (London u.a.: Hutchinson, 1980), 338.

<sup>76</sup> Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*; William Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!*; Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries (Vol II)*.

Amery was born in Gorakhpur, India. His father was English and his mother Hungarian Jewish. In 1887, Amery attended school at Harrow and then Balliol College, Oxford, where he was allegedly an exemplary student and earned numerous rewards. As a graduate, he could already successfully speak Hindi, German, Italian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Serbian, and Hungarian, either fluently or conversationally. After college, he sought a career in journalism where he criticized the British army and denounced issues relating to tariffs and free trade, these lifelong political critiques would be reflected in the EMB and its pursuits later in life.<sup>77</sup>

Notably, by the end of the First World War, Amery found himself staunchly against the creation of the League of Nations. He firmly believed that the world was not equal and as a result, neither was the League. Furthermore, he felt it absurd that the League would grant all states equal grounds to vote. Instead, he believed that the world would continue to lean on the larger states, like Britain, in order to maintain order. Amery called Woodrow Wilson's self-determination notions a "Facile slogan of self-determination."<sup>78</sup> In essence, much like this information reflects, Amery's adherence to British Imperialist attitudes had been reflected in the EMB's poster campaign. The campaign "Buy Empire" revolved in large part around the notion of British supremacy over industrially lacking colonies. These views in the posters are both overt and subliminal but are unquestionably present when comparing poster content.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries (Vol I)*. (London u.a.: Hutchinson, 1980.), 1-80.

<sup>78</sup> Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries (Vol II)*, 162-163.

<sup>79</sup> Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*; William Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!*; "Empire Marketing Board Posters." *Empire Online*.

When Amery became Colonial Secretary in Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's government, he became responsible for managing Britain's colonial "assets".<sup>80</sup> Prior to its dismantling, it was an integral position within the ministry of the British Cabinet and was originally created in order to deal with the gradually straining tensions in the North American colonies. Out of all the members who held this role, Leo Amery was one of four individuals who directly was born in one the British colonies, in this case, India.<sup>81</sup>

In 1925, the Imperial Economic Committee sought the leadership of the Colonial Secretary in order to create a board that would have the sole purpose of furthering Empire trade. Under Amery, this would become the Empire Marketing Board. The committee allocated the EMB £1 million pounds.<sup>82</sup> This money could be spent solely by an "executive commission" that would promote the trade of Empire goods. The committee had hoped this would not only promote the trade of Empire goods, but also increase production so that foreign competition would buy more products.<sup>83</sup> Stephen Tallents, official secretary to the EMB, wrote in his first annual report of the EMB that, "Fundamentally the stimulation of Empire marketing must depend on the private enterprise of producers and traders... The best service that can be done to the Empire producer is to place freely at his disposal the resources of science and economic investigation – to see that he is made aware of sowing and planting, of tending and

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<sup>80</sup> Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries (Vol II)*, 338.

<sup>81</sup> Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries (Vol I)*, 1-80; Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries (Vol II)*, 162-163, 338.

<sup>82</sup> David Meredith. "Imperial Images: The Empire Marketing Board, 1926-32." *History today* 37, no. 1 (1987): 30.

<sup>83</sup> "Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958)." *AIM25 collection*, 1973. [https://aim25.com/cgi-bin/search2?coll\\_id=4658&inst\\_id=16](https://aim25.com/cgi-bin/search2?coll_id=4658&inst_id=16).

<sup>83</sup> Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries*; Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: a Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-2004*. (Harlow: Pearson/Longman, 2004); The National Archives, "Records of the Imperial Economic Committee and Commonwealth Economic Committee." *The National Archives*, August 12, 2009. <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C509>.

harvesting; to show him how his produce should be graded and packed to ensure that it is transported safely and without deterioration: to suggest lastly how its presentation, in the shop window or on the counter, may be fitted to win the *housewife's critical eye* .”<sup>84</sup>

Thus, in May 1926, under Amery's position as Colonel Secretary, the Empire Marketing Board began its work.<sup>85</sup> Alongside the desires of the Imperial Economic Committee, Amery had hoped the board would further his agendas of tariff reform and Empire consumerism.<sup>86</sup> During this time frame, Amery also sought to utilize the position of Colonel Secretary to turn a number of colonies into white-ruled dominions.<sup>87</sup> Specifically, Amery desired to do this with Southern Rhodesia, Palestine, and Kenya. In both India, Africa, and Palestine, resistance to white politicians by nonwhite populations shattered Amery's plans for a white dominated global empire. During his political career, he upheld a series of conservative leaning imperialist views that relied on some of the more stereotypical notions of British, notably white, supremacy.<sup>88</sup> These themes of racial superiority are omnipresent in the EMB's marketing. Despite this espousing of race assumptions, Amery also equally strove to provide other more progressive means for British citizens, such as education. Effectively, Leo Amery was a complicated individual whose imperial views became immortalized through the EMB's poster campaign.<sup>89</sup>

While Leo Amery indisputably played a prominent role in The Empire Marketing Board's actions, he was not be the sole contributor. A number of other individuals helped

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<sup>84</sup> Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*, 34.

<sup>85</sup> Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries* (Vol II), 347.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 347

<sup>87</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share*, 232-242.

<sup>88</sup> William Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!*; Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries* (Vol I); Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries* (Vol II)

<sup>89</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share*, 232-242; Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries* (Vol I); Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries* (Vol II); William Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!*.

sculpt the EMB and its content. Of the most integral members, Sir Stephen George Tallents, was the EMB's first (and only) secretary. Other figures include Walter Elliot, Chairman for the EMB's Research committee and Edward Mayow Hastings Lloyd, the Assistant Secretary to Tallents.<sup>90</sup> While both Walter Elliot and Edward Lloyd accomplished a great many achievements both politically, socially, and in the EMB's name, for the purposes of analyzing the EMB's poster campaign, Tallents played the central role.<sup>91</sup>

As the only secretary of the EMB, Tallents effectively ran the organization. Tallents was a public relations expert and a British civil servant throughout the majority of his career. Tallents was born in London and was educated at Harrow, as well as Balliol, just as Leo Amery was. Once employed by Leo Amery and the Empire Marketing Board, Stephen Tallents was in charge of a number of commissions. These included arranging for the British documentary filmmaker, John Grierson to make EMB films, as well as commissioning artists to fill the pivotal illustrator roles for the EMB's poster campaign. His commission included illustrators like: Spencer Pryse, E. McKnight Kauffer, Frank Newbould, and Clive Gardiner.<sup>92</sup> While it is difficult to say who directly guided the themes portrayed in the EMB, Tallent's did have a direct hand in appointing the artists involved in creating the posters. In this sense, Amery and Tallent's views came

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<sup>90</sup> Lloyd Hastings, "Lloyd, Edward Mayow Hastings (1889-1968)." *Archives Hub*, January 1, 1970. <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/67b7db45-29f8-3480-947e-073d0eddb36e>.

<sup>91</sup> "Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958)." *AIM25 collection*; Ashley Kristen Bower, "Rebranding Empire".; Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*.

<sup>92</sup> After the EMB, Tallents took a large portion of the staff he appointed and went on to work for the General Post Office, BBC, Ministry of Information, and the president of the Institute of Public Relations, see Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*, 64-100.

together with the mission of the Imperial Economic Committee to produce an organization that reinforced specific views on race and Britishness.<sup>93</sup>

As per the ideologies of the era, as well as the social changes occurring, the Interwar Period idealization of the white, male, upper class British subject notably excluded a wide variety of people. These themes are chiefly what the EMB marketed in its posters. In turn, this would create two differing lines of thought. For those within the EMB's target audience (the white, nationalistic, elite Briton), the full benefits of citizenry would be made available to them. Whereas, if one were outside of this target vision, not only would one be discouraged from acquiring Empire goods, but society would demean the role one played in it. If the EMB were to abet this racialized culture and reinforce gender and class norms, it depended entirely on how present the posters were in British Interwar society, as well as the appeal of its general concepts.<sup>94</sup>

The EMB's poster adverts circulated widely at a national level, within the local press, shop window displays, and even highway displays.<sup>95</sup> The posters found their way into roughly 1700 different cities, 450 British cities and towns, but found only minimal presence in colonial districts.<sup>96</sup> The images espoused printed media that was displayed in

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<sup>93</sup> "Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958).", *AIM25 collection*; David Meredith. "Imperial Images: The Empire Marketing Board, 1926-32.", 30; Scott Anthony. *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*, 29-62

<sup>94</sup> Some of the statistics, poster "types", and objectives relating to the spread of the EMB's poster campaign can be found within Stephen Tallent's papers, as well as research by historian Karl Hack on the UK's educational resource site, *OpenLearn*. Under which there is an entire subsection dedicated to "Selling Empire"; "Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958).", *AIM25 collection*; Karl Hack, "Selling Empire."

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, Karl Hack, "Selling Empire".

<sup>96</sup> I could not find the exact document, but the government of New Zealand and a few Dominions reportedly protested the posters. They claimed that not only did the posters not increase exports, but that they also had "unintended effects". I found references to this information that traced back to a document in the Archives of New Zealand. Sadly, I could not locate the document itself, nor do I believe it has been digitized. The document was titled: *Empire Marketing Board Report, Economic Affairs, Imperial Trade*. The following archival information was also referenced: EA1 154/4/15 Part 1. 17 October 1930.



bright, vibrant colors. This, coupled with the image's large text was designed in such a fashion as to appeal to onlookers and passerby. The posters had been placed five at a time next to each other and aimed often to tell specific stories about specific themes. For instance, one line of posters titled "Empire Builders" aimed to depict important figures in Empire history, as well as the "everyday" man who kept it running. Other instances showed the production of a material from the colonies to a British shop.<sup>97</sup> In reality, these "stories" do not always easily correlate to one another and were little more than general themes.<sup>98</sup>

According to "Selling Empire", the EMB produced millions of posters in its six years, in addition to a few gigantic billboard features. They cite the example "Highways of Empire, 1927" as a prominent example of these. Aside from this, the EMB was able to create this quantity through cheap, smaller posters that were shipped to thousands of British schools, as well as, sold to public recipients.<sup>99</sup> The smallest versions were even small enough that they could be stuck on an automobile window. Since the overwhelming message of the posters was to circulate Empire goods, a hierarchy is noted in the posters. They encourage one to first buy British products, then Empire, and then foreign last. Foreign products would represent trade from countries and territories that did not have direct affiliation with the Empire (i.e., non-Dominions). "Selling Empire" depicts that the

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<sup>97</sup> "Empire Builders - Cabot To Clive" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/7>; "A Country Grocer's Shop" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/36>

<sup>98</sup> Karl Hack, "Selling Empire".

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.



EMB had over 27,000 schools on its distribution list to ship posters.<sup>100</sup> In 1931 alone, the EMB created approximately four million posters for its “Buy British” campaign.<sup>101</sup>

“Selling Empire” has a section detailing how one should read the poster. In this sense, they mean literally what the Empire was projecting, not how it could be perceived from a 21st century perspective. “Selling Empires” suggests that the posters were meant to be viewed as a depiction of the Empire that possessed “the very model of modernity”.<sup>102</sup> The Empire desired to have one believe that its systems of trade had not only been unmatched but could also be made available globally via international ships, as well as aircraft.<sup>103</sup>

In addition to this, the EMB also intentionally illustrated the posters to possess an element of what could then be considered “modern” in terms of art, technology, and British customs. However, there is also a deliberate attention to nostalgia and more traditional British ideals in addition to a direct appeal to concepts of uncertainty and exploration. This is despite the fact that these themes could also be perceived as white British constituents waging imperialist notions on foreign entities in the name of false glory or pursuit of exciting adventure. To reinforce these themes of “exploration” and other old-world ideals, some posters feature sea monsters, Anemoi, or even star charts. Other images drawn on quotes by the Pope or Shakespeare.<sup>104</sup> There is a definite projected element here that the British Empire desired to portray itself as modern, and

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<sup>100</sup> Karl Hack, “Selling Empire”.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid “Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958).” *AIM25 collection*

<sup>104</sup> Karl Hack. “Selling Empire.”.

unified. Although, it also desired to bridge the gap between this and older British culture/history.

Evidently, the posters alone did not generate enough revenue to save the EMB, however, the continued mass production of the posters does indicate that there was at least some level of interest or positive reception. Considering that the EMB posters were designed to promote Empire goods, and the designers of the EMB wished to promote this through a specific vision of the Empire, this also suggests that this loaded racial, gender, and class vision of Empire was what was appealing. “Selling Empire” cites that when the “Highways of Empire” billboard was put up in 1927, the Manchester Guardian detailed that it was so attractive that it caused London highway congestion.<sup>105</sup> Albeit, in the same article, the Manchester Guardian noted that this was also “Imperialism without the tears”, indicating a level of class conscience in regard to the effects of imperialism.<sup>106</sup> As was mentioned within Chapter two’s literature review, sentiments relating to anti-colonialism also saw a level of steady growth during the Interwar Period. This would have run directly counter to the EMB’s goals and interests.<sup>107</sup>

In addition to this, “Selling Empire” details that aside from Britain directly, the EMB’s depiction of colonial development was entirely hierarchy based. Britain always portrayed itself as the parent, then its childlike “Dominions” as something akin to young adults. Lastly, Britain’s other “less developed” colonies are displayed in the tone of “adopted children in need of education.”. However, this is observable even without

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<sup>105</sup> “The Manchester Guardian Weekly.”, *Library of Congress*, 1927.

<https://catalog.loc.gov/vwebv/search?searchCode=LCCN&searchArg=2009218101&searchType=1&permalink=y>.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Stephen Howe. *Anticolonialism in British Politics*; Karl Hack. “Selling Empire.”; “Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958).” *AIM25 collection*.

“Selling Empire’s” analysis. It is worth noting that even in their methodical research on the posters elements and circulation, the closest that “Selling Empire” comes to touching on race is in one quote where they state, “Though many posters depict non-Europeans in much more flattering light than the above – some attempting a sympathetic realism – they are almost always shown working, often under a European supervisory gaze, and occasionally with exaggerated or exoticized features. Very few of the artists were from the colonies depicted, and many had not visited them.”.<sup>108</sup>

“Selling Empire” does not, like most sources on the EMB, talk about reception of the posters, nor more importantly, some of their seemingly overt messages. Statistical data relating to public reception is difficult to ascertain. Otherwise, “Selling Empire” gives three interesting pieces of information. They display statistics relating to the distribution of the posters, as well as their various types/general concepts. They also give a brief analysis on the themes portrayed and the historical context needed to understand them. This information, coupled with important dates, key figures, and social climates give an important indication of the EMB and how it operated.<sup>109</sup>

Some of this information can be inferred by addressing how and why the EMB collapsed. An in-depth study conducted by economist, Dr. David Higgins explores the exact reasonings this occurred and what elements the EMB failed to utilize. The EMB’s role was to facilitate trade between Britain and its Empire. However, by means of a trade strategy called “soft trade policy”, Higgins details that the EMB ultimately would ultimately fail in achieving its objective. “Soft trade policy” refers to Britain's free-trade tool to return tariff preferences that the Empires exports appreciated in respective Empire

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<sup>108</sup> Karl Hack, “Selling Empire”.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

markets. Britain and its empire had become the largest importer of produce on a global scale. So much so that their elevated position was held throughout the Interwar Period. Therefore, the EMB and the avenues it wanted to pursue were limited in scope. In order to succeed, its efforts would have to be rooted in the then contemporary preferences. Namely trade items like Argentine beef, Danish butter, and products outside the British Empire itself were among this contemporary preference. By the EMB promoting goods that were frequently found within its colonial constituents, it is likely British subjects would not be *as* interested in the product compared to other foreign goods. Ultimately, Higgins concludes that due to “Soft trade policies” ineffectiveness, the EMB was replaced. While it is possible viewers engaged with the EMB posters due to their visuals, products within the Empire were not nearly as desired.<sup>110</sup>

Ultimately sources, like this, as well as “Selling Empire,” provide important information regarding the spread, goals, personalities, and eventual dissolving of the EMB, all of which is critical in contextualizing its poster campaign and who it may have reached. However, these sources, policies, and historical figures do little to address anything related to the EMB’s visual use of race, class, and gender representations within Britain and the Empire. Although they may occasionally scratch the surface of the EMB’s poster content, these studies fail to do any in-depth social analysis concerning the implications of the racially charged themes the EMB portrayed. The following chapters will unpack these ideas in the effort to demonstrate that while the EMB’s posters encouraged economic and cultural ties within the empire, they also cultivated attitudes towards concepts of class, gender, and particularly race.

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<sup>110</sup> David Higgins, and Brian Varian. “The Economic Failure of Britain's Empire Marketing Board.” *VOX, CEPR Policy Portal*.

## Chapter 4

### Perception of the Colonies

#### An Inter-Empire Poster Campaign on Race, Gender, and Class

As the primary focus of the research conducted here, this chapter explores the loaded racial, gender, and class messages within the EMB's "Buy Empire" poster campaign. The campaign produced 222 unique posters from varied illustrators that were spread throughout Britain, neighboring countries, and even its colonies for approximately seven years.<sup>111</sup> These images portrayed an equally large medley of themes and topics relating to the Empire and its constituents. While the images generally encouraged Britons to buy Empire-produced products, the appearance of additional subliminal and overt themes regarding race, class and gender are consistently present. Although not every image in the EMB's poster collection is inherently charged with these ideas, more than half of the original 222 present controversial tropes at the expense of one marginalized group or another.<sup>112</sup> This construction of race, class, and gender notions through government-sponsored marketing is noteworthy, even when not judged through the lens of a 21st century perspective. The pervasive presence of these attitudes in day-to-

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<sup>111</sup> Ashley Kristen Bower. "Rebranding Empire", 1-5; Karl Hack, "Selling Empire."

<sup>112</sup> The other half of the images analyzed depicted either much less overt themes or were simple advertisements that display slogans like "Buy Empire" or "Smoke Empire Tobacco" (almost like bumper stickers). Additionally, a large number of these images showcased landscapes within the British Empire. These images largely did not display people (and if they did, they were barely made visible). Furthermore, they did not depict cultural assets that would bring forth questions of colonial or British perception. As such, while these images were certainly interesting there was little evidence to claim they could abet a racialized culture or marginalize a demographic of people. If anything, the presence of half racial, gender, and class loaded images compared to half that did not, highlights that the EMB prioritized economics first and an idealized vision of the British Empire second.

day British lives in the 19020s seem eerily similar to advertising controversies in contemporary society.<sup>113</sup>

The posters for the EMB's "Buy Empire" campaign present various different themes and conversations worthy of analysis. The posters, as well as the conversations they present, are grouped into two categories. The first of these categories, covered in this chapter, related to "Perceptions of the Colonies". This section covers posters that depict British colonists, dominions, territories, protectorates, important trade partners, and so forth. The attitudes displayed toward foreigners in these posters reflect the British government's interpretation and imposition of race, gender, and class norms within the British Empire. Effectively, the British Empire, as seen through the lens of the EMB, did not see everyone as being equal, particularly those not native to the British mainland. These attitudes were exemplified within the posters in this category as they depicted how British subjects viewed their colonial counterparts.<sup>114</sup>

Chapter five assesses posters in the second category, "British Subjects at Home," which illustrate Britons in Wales, England, and Scotland. In this section, various illustrators portrayed the idealized British subject and their "nuclear family." This revolved around a traditionally white, male middle to upper class individual in charge. However, according to Tallents, the female counterpart to this demographic was the primary target audience for the EMB posters.<sup>115</sup> As such there is an equal focus on posters that feature women taking care of the home, catering to company, or buying

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<sup>113</sup> "Empire Marketing Board Collections." *Manchester Art Gallery*; "Empire Marketing Board Posters." *Empire Online*.

<sup>114</sup> "Empire Marketing Board Collections.", *Manchester Art Gallery*.

<sup>115</sup> Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*, 34.

Empire related products.<sup>116</sup> In these two chapters, posters relating to the perception of the colonies and British subjects at home will be showcased in order to demonstrate the EMB, and as a result, the British Empire's idealization of the British citizen. By depicting who did and who did not fit within this idealization, it will be made apparent how the EMB, aside from selling goods, marketed popular stereotypes, racist thinking, as well as a particular vision of the British Empire.

### **The EMB's Colonial Posters**

Out of the many images produced by the Empire Marketing Board, a large majority of the posters are geared to showcase Interwar Period British colonies. Consequently, since these images predominantly aimed to increase trade within the British Empire, the EMB oversaw wide circulation within Britain, neighboring countries, and occasionally the colonies themselves.<sup>117</sup> It is evident based on the messages, imagery, language, and chosen styles that the intended audience of these posters was British subjects. Whereas colonists and other foreign entities were a secondary concern. The EMB's posters that depicted the "colonies" were intentionally geared to appear foreign when compared to British lifestyles. These colonial posters often possess fantastical renditions of life outside of Britain to evoke emotions of exploration and excitement. This is reinforced by the EMB's usage of visuals such as star charts, sea monsters, and frequent depictions of 19<sup>th</sup> century explorer garb.<sup>118</sup> Additionally, since the EMB had

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<sup>116</sup> These are two archival collections where posters analyzed had these themes. These are also the two primary archival sources used to view the EMB posters (*Manchester Art Gallery* had a full collection, however, they were better categorized on *Empire Online*); "Empire Marketing Board Collections", *Manchester Art Gallery*; "Empire Marketing Board Posters." *Empire Online*.

<sup>117</sup> Karl Hack, "Selling Empire."; "Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958).", *AIM25 collection*.

<sup>118</sup> Karl Hack, "Selling Empire".

adhered to its “Buy Empire” slogan, one of the more prominent aims was to have imagery depict the physical processing of these foreign colonial goods. This meant that more often than not posters illustrating any distant or overseas entity represented their industrial capacity, techniques, and resource construction. While it is possible the EMB’s illustrators attempted to celebrate the colonies for their unique cultural traditions, any semblance of this is overshadowed by Britain’s influential presence. Whenever the EMB illustrators introduced people, representations of their material “culture,” or industrial capacity, there is a shared underlying message of white British supremacy. This is not to say that there are not occasional attempts to present foreign culture accurately, and not every EMB poster is charged in terms of race, class, and gender. However, more than half of 222 unique posters are freighted with these overarching themes.<sup>119</sup>

The Empire Marketing Board may have been shut down during the Interwar Period, however, its images remain relevant. Whether they are used for educational purposes or representations of a bygone Empire, the images of the EMB are not only recognizable today but are also easily accessible. This is likely due to both the quantity of available images produced, as well as the EMB’s preservation of Empire ideals, both positive and negative.

One of the many images that tend to stand out in the EMB’s collection, as a colonial depiction, is the poster titled “Colombo, Ceylon” (Figure 3.). This image, much like many in this chapter, displays a continued theme of trade and industrial prosperity. It is the multitude of inherent additional themes the EMB flaunts that alters its message. The poster is illustrated by Kenneth D. Shoesmith in 1928. Shoesmith was a British artist

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<sup>119</sup> “Empire Marketing Board Collections.” *Manchester Art Gallery*; “Empire Marketing Board Posters.” *Empire Online*.



that cultivated a wide array of images for the EMB and other government-oriented organizations during his lifetime.<sup>120</sup> His piece, “Colombo, Ceylon,” depicts a minimalist take on trade that is leaving (or potentially being imported to) Colombo, the commercial capital of the British colony of Ceylon, now modern-day Sri Lanka.<sup>121</sup> Colombo is portrayed as a fairly large sized port town. There is an ironclad British vessel in the backdrop that has the British flag raised. In the foreground, a notably white, clean-cut British sailor oversees the transaction of EMB-branded London goods. A black, elderly, expressionless merchant stands apart on the other side of the white British male overlooking the exchange. Presumably, he is in charge of the workers at the dock. He is fully clothed, which is indicative of a higher societal position than his workers. Aside from the merchant overseers, the workers bringing in the cargo are presumably locals of Colombo and are depicted as interchangeable black individuals, including the lead merchant, who is the most distinct. The Colombo natives wear what is purported as being traditional clothing of the area, however, their class positions are made evident based on the type of clothing and how much they have.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> There is little digitized information regarding Shoesmith available. Although, there are numerous sites that showcase his artwork and the years he worked. Comparing the differing image is telling about who he was as an artist and who he worked for. See below for image gallery; Kenneth Shoesmith. “Kenneth Shoesmith Artwork.” Artnet. Accessed April 27, 2021.  
<http://www.artnet.com/artists/kenneth-shoesmith/>.

<sup>121</sup> Nira Wickramasinghe, “*Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History*” Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2015.

<sup>122</sup> “Colombo, Ceylon” *Empire Online*, April 7, 2021.<https://www-empire-amdigoal-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/2?SessionExpired=True>

**Figure 3**

*“Colombo, Ceylon”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Kenneth D. Shoesmith. Commissioned in 1928 and printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Waterlow & Sons LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>123</sup> “Colombo, Ceylon” *Empire Online*.

There is a wide array of themes present in this image, such as the clashing ideals of an industrialized empire society vs the interaction with an “underdeveloped” territory. There is also a clear distinction between racial categories and class. It bears noting that the city of Colombo, Ceylon was a territory in Southeast Asia and is home to a medley of different ethnic groups.<sup>124</sup> Colombo itself is depicted as a kind of tannish, bland color, highlighting the presence of the brilliantly colored steel grey British vessel moored in the backdrop. This draws immediate attention to the differences in technology, wealth, ability, and most importantly, who the ship is owned by. Judging how the Colombo cargo crew is pulling the shipment and by the quality of the vessel they are standing on, they are receiving a shipment of non-disclosed Empire Marketing Board goods. The packages are stamped with the words London. In the image, Britain is bringing the benefits of progress and wealth to this “underdeveloped” colony. This same notion is reinforced by the presence of the individuals overseeing the operation. In a deliberately placed attempt to contrast one another, a slouched, leaning white British sailor holding a piece of paper (presumably some sort of manifest) watches the notably all black crew. The only white individual is a strong jawed male who is clean cut and fits a classical definition of handsome. In this opinion, he is purposefully drawn to look strong, adventurous, and appealing. He represents someone that befits the image of a Merchant Marine. His presence brings forth notions of masculinity, order, and civility.<sup>125</sup> All the ideas presented are to be associated with the British Empire and were associated with concepts of nationalism.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Nira Wickramasinghe. *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age*, 1-35, 47-64, 117-134.

<sup>125</sup> Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*, 72-100; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 27-40, 57-70, 71-84.

<sup>126</sup> “Colombo, Ceylon” *Empire Online*.

On the British Merchant Marine's left is the black merchant who is assumed to be in command of the crew overseeing the cargo. He is an older, expressionless gentleman. Unlike his crew, his upper body is clothed in garb that is explicitly more western in style. The only cultural clothing shared between him and his crew is the wrap around his head. In addition to this garb, he has facial hair, earrings, and clothing that is indicative of a position in the upper echelon of society. At the very least, he is depicted as being a class that is equal to the British naval officer/above the working crew. This ascribes to David Cannadine's findings that the British Empire authorized control through a country's local elite.<sup>127</sup> Either way, the black merchant is distinctive compared to the rest of his crew. The cargo crew are all black, expressionless, and bear the stereotype characteristics of anti-black caricatures.<sup>128</sup> They each have ruby red lips, heavy dark coloring for their skin, minimal clothing, no shoes, and are all muscular. These dock workers are purposefully portrayed as poor and are separated from the rest of the people in the image. These individuals are drawn to appear more primitive compared to the industrialized British. Aside from characteristics relating to age, the individuals and their body types, aside from the white male are indistinguishable and non-descript from one another. They are all men, fit, and coupled with the presence of trade, are designed to emit masculinity and a semblance of adventure alongside the Empire's foreign endeavors.<sup>129</sup>

The EMB poster, "Colombo, Ceylon" is an ideal example of some of the most common tropes used by the EMB when depicting colonial or foreign atmospheres. In virtually every EMB colonial poster, there is an abundant theme of lack of industrial

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<sup>127</sup> David Cannadine. *Ornamentalism*, 27-84

<sup>128</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule; with a New Preface* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 22-40.

<sup>129</sup> "Colombo, Ceylon" *Empire Online*; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*.

progress. When development is present, it is the white British individuals who are supplying this industrialization. Throughout the images, the EMB's notion of class and a white British superiority is on clear display. Coupled alongside these notions of industrialization, or lack of, the EMB tended to illustrate its foreign characters as uniformly nondescript, poor, and consistently black, regardless of geography. The EMB utilizes these notions in order to generate the view that not only did non-white individuals fit this impoverished view of colonial society, but that it was the duty of the British Empire to help bring these people up to speed. If one were a constituent within the British Empire, this separation through race and class could draw the impression that people were not equal, especially if they appeared foreign. An individual outside of this EMB romanticized vision who was within the British mainland could easily be made to feel distant or excluded from society's opportunities.<sup>130</sup>

Another prominent EMB poster that orchestrates these notions of intertwined race and class is the two-piece image "East-African Transport ~ Old Style" (Figure 4.) and "East-African Transport ~ New Style" (Figure 5.). However, these images are distinct for their use of gender.<sup>131</sup> Both images were created by Adrian Paul Allison, another white British illustrator, who did work for the EMB during his lifetime. The first of the two images "East African Transport ~ Old Style" depicts "commonplace" trading/transportation of goods in East African territory. The text accompanying the illustration uses the wording "Old Style" to notify viewers that the visual scene predates

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<sup>130</sup> "Colombo, Ceylon" *Empire Online*.

<sup>131</sup> "East-African Transport ~ Old Style" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/4>; "East-African Transport ~ New Style" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/6>

British territory control. British interaction in East Africa oversaw the control of territories such as Kenya, Uganda, Zanzibar, and Tanganyika. Since this image proclaims itself to be a representation of East African transport prior to foreign interaction (and it is a British poster), it can be inferred that this is no later than the established control of British Zanzibar and Uganda in 1890 and 1894.<sup>132</sup> It is not clearly illustrated which specific territory these people/environments belong to. Instead in this East African generalization, the illustrators depict a line of black people carrying a wide array of cultivated goods. The land they traverse is characteristic of African wilderness. There are winding hill like mountain ranges, hot arid climates, bending and winding trees in sparse density, and unexplored, and open tracts of land.<sup>133</sup> These environmental motifs are drawn to suggest the people are not in full control of the land. In this, men, women, and children make their way to transport goods to an unknown destination. A woman leads the group in the foreground, she like much of the group has sparse clothing. The goods these people are transporting range from cultural items (pots, containers, tools, livestock, etc.). The image presents these individuals as bearing the hardships of the land and continuing to make do without the accommodations of modern technologies/processes.<sup>134</sup> Once more, some of these images are clear in the EMB's ideas about race. Throughout their posters, the reinforcing perceptions of race are pure examples of why this type of content continues to persist and is relatively accepted.

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<sup>132</sup> Barbara Harlow, and Mia Carter. *The Scramble for Africa*. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 13-18.

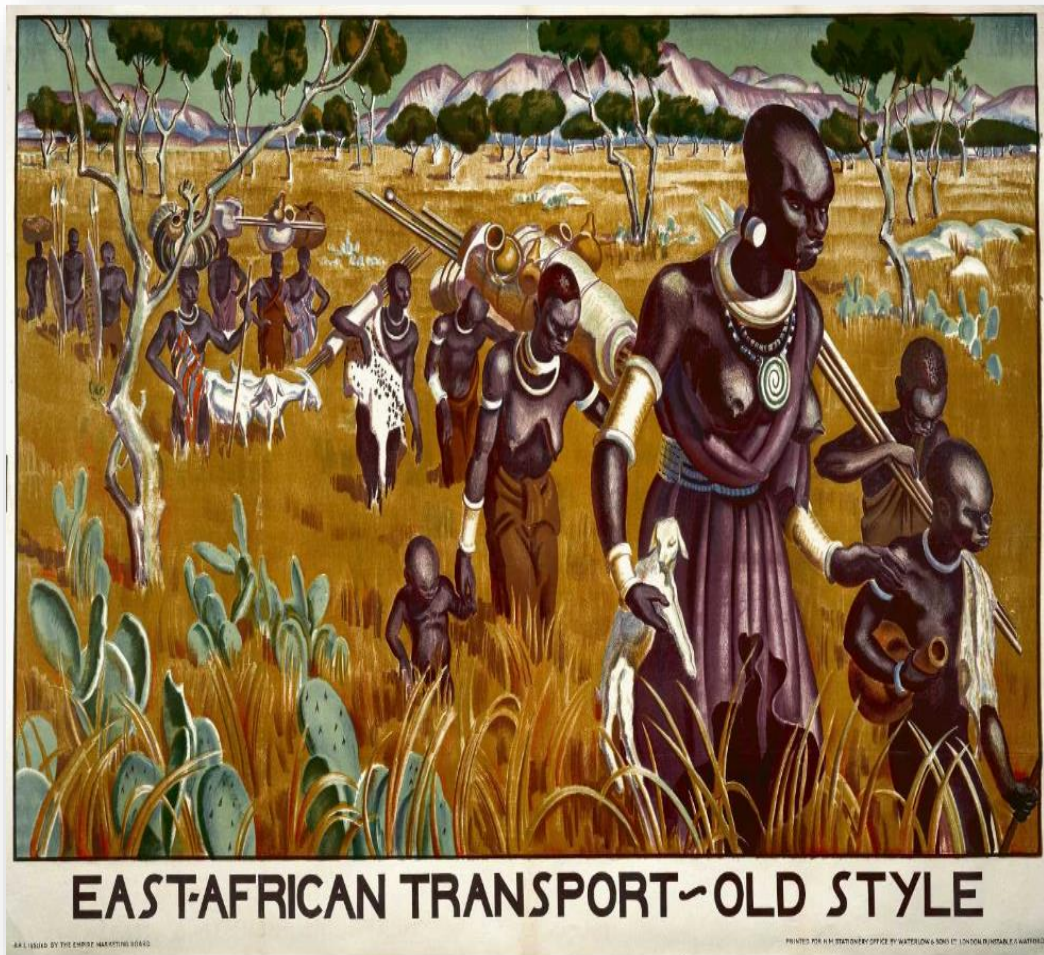
<sup>133</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *Africa, Its Geography, People, and Products; and, Africa, Its Place in Modern History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 34-43.

<sup>134</sup> "East-African Transport ~ Old Style" *Empire Online*.



**Figure 4**

*“East African Transport ~ Old Style”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Adrian Paul Allinson. Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Waterlow & Sons LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>135</sup> “East-African Transport ~ Old Style” *Empire Online*.

This image further embodies many of the themes the EMB presents. The people here lack all manner of British civility. Most of them are barely clothed, if at all. They carry primitive tools, armaments, and raw goods. Elements of culture are present (beads, gauges, clothing specific items). While these elements of culture are illustrated, they are done so without acknowledging their cultural worth. To the viewer, these amenities and traditions are geared to represent an impoverished, agrarian society, one that lacked all the efficiency of industrialization. Instead, it is provided that these people both live off and are at the mercy of the land. They live within its boundaries and issue no command over it. The text in this image implies that this is what African trade looked like prior to foreign (presumably British) interaction. This is made especially apparent when viewing the second part to this image.<sup>136</sup>

The foremost issues with race in this image come in the portrayal of “East-African Transport ~ Old Style’s” people. For one, as seen in “Colombo, Ceylon”, there are apparently only identical black individuals in “foreign” areas like Africa or in Southeast Asia. The native people of East Africa seen in this poster are depicted as dark-skinned. They have oblong shaped heads, disproportionate features, native dress, and jewelry that are traditional characteristics to represent older versions of a black caricature.<sup>137</sup> It is not clear if the illustrator aimed to depict a specific group of people, the

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<sup>136</sup> “East-African Transport ~ Old Style” *Empire Online*.

<sup>137</sup> Temitope Odumosu. *Africans in English Caricature 1769-1819: Black Jokes, White Humour*. (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2017.), 1-220; David Pilgrim, and Henry Louis Gates. *Understanding Jim Crow: Using Racist Memorabilia to Teach Tolerance and Promote Social Justice*. (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2015.), 61-94; While *Understanding Jim Crow* is an American reference, the same concepts apply. A number of the images featured in chapter four of this work hold elements that are mirrored in some of the EMB’s styles (Albeit the EMB’s are less overt and not as graphic.). Many of the images in chapter four of *Understanding Jim Crow* predate the Interwar Period in Britain when the posters were advertised. In effect, these images, while not directly British are a good example of existing anti-black/racist imagery that was used to insult the intelligence and perception of people that were not white. In the case of the “East-African Transport” series an apt example would be the



image is simply presenting an East-African colony.<sup>138</sup> The depiction of the people, their traditions, quality of goods, and tools harken back to an age previous to this timeframe. Once again, the portrayal of East African people highlights that their culture is both primitive and in need of British help.<sup>139</sup>

The counter-part image presents a stark contrast to the themes presented in “Old Style”. In “East-African Transport ~ New Style”, Allinson’s second story image portrays the innovation brought about by British, notably white, interaction. In this image the white male explorer, adventurer, merchant, influential role, etc. brings characteristics of “civilized” society to East Africa. In contrast to the previous poster, this image pictures a lush landscape with many human made changes to its surroundings. Proper roads have been carved for vehicles to traverse, a number of which carry numerous East Africans and a medley of goods that are notably far more than before. The individuals in this image cross a manmade bridge that has been constructed across a river. A number of other colonists haul merchandise out of a docked boat. A white young male stand poised

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image “Roller Skate Craze” which was a postcard from 1907 that depicted a black waiter with disproportionate features, an oblong shaped head, and overly accentuated ruby red lips. This image was on page 93 of *Understanding Jim Crow*.

<sup>138</sup> There did exist a culture of African people called the Mangbetu who lived in *Central Africa*. They often had oblong shaped heads due to a cultural tradition that oversaw wrapping infants heads in tight cloth. For these people, this was a symbol of status, beauty, and higher intelligence. Having said this, the Mangbetu people lived in Central Africa and not East Africa where the “East-African Transport” series took place. The Mangbetu people were also colonized by the Belgians who outlawed the practice. The difference is that for the EMB image, the illustrator of the “East-African Transport” series is placing this perceived deformity upon all Africans in East Africa. There is also no information to insinuate it is this specific culture. There is an interesting article on *History daily* that details the Mangbetu people (WARNING: graphic imagery); Lily Rowan. “The Elongated Heads of the Mangbetu People.” *History Daily*, September 7, 2016. <https://historydaily.org/mangbetu-people#:~:text=Mangbetu%20people%20live%20in%20Central,their%20heads%20the%20elongated%20look.>

<sup>139</sup> Amanda Behm, *Imperial History and the Global Politics of Exclusion: Britain, 1880-1940*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); “Colombo, Ceylon” *Empire Online*; “East-African Transport ~ Old Style” *Empire Online*.

above everyone else, directing the people. The image on the whole is geared to elicit the obvious notion that with British interaction, the East African people have benefited enormously in quality of life.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> “East-African Transport ~ New Style” *Empire Online*; “East-African Transport ~ Old Style” *Empire Online*.

**Figure 5**

*“East African Transport ~ New Style”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Adrian Paul Allison. Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Waterlow & Sons LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>141</sup> “East-African Transport ~ New Style” *Empire Online*.

“East-African Transport ~ New Style” revolves around the sole notion that when the notably white foreigner arrives, all manner of change is suddenly evoked. Now that colonies have been established, nearly all of the elements of ancient tribal groups have disappeared. Lush landscapes, winding hills, and dense forests have replaced the stereotyped arid and dry climates in the previous image. The same type of snowless mountain range exists in the background as if to remind viewers that this does still indeed take place in the foreign lands of East Africa. Since this was generated by the same artist, the same black individuals appear physically similar. However, it is noticeable that all former elements of African culture and society are gone. The few that remain are the occasional earring, necklace, and armband. Furthermore, while some of the younger individuals are still not clothed, the majority of people now are.<sup>142</sup> Effectively, it is inferable that these posters were meant to sell the idea of Empire, as well as the goods that came with its productivity.

The most important feature of this image is its attention to gender. No longer present is the strong depiction of women leading the transport; instead, they have been replaced by the singular clean cut, characteristic white British male, who now literally presides over the group.<sup>143</sup> The only woman left in this image has been shunted to the far background. It is worth noting, that aside from being barely visible, she is now completely clothed without anything exposed. This is a significant difference from the previous image. With the advent of the white male, there is an immediate imposing of values that are deemed societally appropriate. There is also an important difference in the expressions of the people. In the previous image, the people were confident, tough, and

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<sup>142</sup> “East-African Transport ~ Old Style” *Empire Online*.

<sup>143</sup> Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*, 72-100.

bore some elements of facial distinction. Now all of the black people who are visible look sad and forlorn, nearly expressionless and hollow. Each looks down at the ground while performing their tasks. This is a particular interesting choice by the illustrator who was trying to promote “Buy Empire”. These individuals should be portrayed as being happy under British rule, and yet they do not appear so.<sup>144</sup>

Furthermore, aside from hair and obvious differences in age, the black individuals are also barely indistinguishable from each other in terms of appearance and skin coloration. However, despite all this symbolism, the most prominent and telling characteristic of the people illustrated in this image is in the white male. The British overseer is the only human whose eyes are visible to the viewer. Not only is he the only individual whose head is posited to look forward, his eyes are glancing down on the people beneath him. While this was probably generated in the effort of making him look like the fearless leader, his physical stature of looking downward on people whose focus is already on the ground, evokes a different theme entirely. These two images present highly dissimilar themes, however, the EMB’s perception of race and its colonists is abundantly clear in both. In the first, the EMB presented East Africans as primitive and left behind in society’s advent. Despite this, the illustrator drew the people (unintentional or not) as making a claim to their own path, confident, and in charge, whereas in the second image, the illustrator geared the impression to be that of “white empire brings progress.” What is ultimately made transparent is that colonialism inherently trades command and self-determination for Empire branded new style “progress.”<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> “East-African Transport ~ New Style” *Empire Online*.

<sup>145</sup> “East-African Transport ~ New Style” *Empire Online*; “East-African Transport ~ Old Style” *Empire Online*.

The EMB's posters "Colombo, Ceylon" and the "East-African Transport" series share an important concept that the EMB continually stresses throughout its poster campaign. With small and infrequent exceptions, the EMB depicts to its British mainland viewers that when it comes to British colonies, or foreign entities for that matter, the only individuals present are of a uniform black skin tone. These EMB individuals are additionally drawn with either non-descript detailing or exaggerated stereotypical features. They are not identical, but there is little variation in their physical makeup. Reportedly, these images were made widely available in Britain, and even distributed to colonies and other countries.<sup>146</sup> These themes are apparent in all but a few images that portray foreign entities that are not Britain.

Another example of the interchangeable foreign "black" depiction that can be seen outside of Africa is demonstrated in the poster "Borneo, Sago" (Figure 6.). In this image, the Asian island's inhabitants are exhibited similarly to "Colombo, Ceylon."<sup>147</sup> "Borneo, Sago" was illustrated by Edgar Ainsworth in 1930. This specific poster is one of only a few that deal with Southeast Asia directly, specifically the British colony of Borneo. In this rather crudely simplistic rendering of Borneo, viewers are supposed to be witnessing the extraction of a starch made from Sago palms in the area. Aside from this, the image depicts a dense rainforest in which beasts of burden move and farm the land of

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<sup>146</sup> This is the same source for citation #88, the New Zealand document that was not digitized. The document was titled: *Empire Marketing Board Report, Economic Affairs, Imperial Trade*. The following archival information was referenced for the non-digitized document: EA1 154/4/15 Part 1. 17 October 1930.

<sup>147</sup> "Colombo, Ceylon" *Empire Online*; "East-African Transport ~ New Style" *Empire Online*; "Borneo, Sago" *Empire Online*; Karl Hack. "Selling Empire." *OpenLearn*; "Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958)." *AIM25 collection*.

Sago. Rice hat equipped, black individuals ride the cattle, while in the backdrop equally dark colored individuals, devoid of detail, harvest and prepare the crop variant.

**Figure 6**

*“Borneo, Sago”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Edgar Ainsworth. Commissioned in 1930 and printed for H.M.

Stationery Office by Johnson Riddle & Co. LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> “Borneo, Sago” *Empire Online*.



Aside from obvious concepts of race, the EMB often only highlighted the production of goods within a respective colony. It is understood that the goal had been to advertise products while advertising the foreign environments they came from. However, with the exception of a few posters, the average British subject would not have many direct connections to the colonies or rather according to those like Bernard Porter, be less involved in Empire affairs.<sup>149</sup> If one of their visual basis were the content of the EMB posters, these individuals would assume much worse about the colonists and their conditions. Aside from race depictions, the only features within “Borneo, Sago” are primitive production facilities. In other images, at most, a village, town, or city is shown, under which they are drawn much less grand in stature than in actuality. The omnipresent degradation of colonists and their living/operating conditions would undoubtedly aid, at least subliminally notions of white superiority or rhetoric surrounding a need for benevolence. Furthermore, the purposes of this imagery also served to construct a white British identity and reinforce the need for imperialism, all while promoting Empire goods. In “Borneo Sago”, this limited fascination with just the production of goods in colonies is present again. Beast of burden cattle pull sago palms to a crude thatch enclosure. Under this building, dark skinned, shirtless, expressionless individuals labor over the product. Despite the fact that Borneo is home to many different ethnicities and demographics, the EMB presentation of the Asian populace is black individuals.<sup>150</sup> Aside from this, their physical features showcase tight lips, jawlines, near emaciated faces, and heavily squinted eyes. Unfortunately, after comparing these individuals to the EMB’s

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<sup>149</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*.

<sup>150</sup> Victor T. King, Zawawi Ibrahim, and Noor Hasharina. Hassan. *Borneo Studies in History, Society and Culture*. (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2017), 135

Briton, they barely look human. Only one figure's face is visible in the image. Like previous depictions from the EMB, all of the individuals here are male, black and appear without many workplace amenities. They wear shorts and checkered shirts, or minimal clothing. The black figures in the backdrop wear only the standard EMB foreigner's white knee-high shorts and no one has shoes. These visuals generate the notion that these people belong to a lower class.<sup>151</sup>

When dealing with the EMB's perceptions of the colonies, the EMB consistently depicts Britons as white, while in "Borneo, Sago", "Colombo, Ceylon", and the "East African Transport" series, colonized peoples are an equally unvarying black, regardless of location. These foreign "British constituents" are rarely given detail and are more often than not placed in positions that involve menial labor, industrial processing, or spaces that would highlight a deliberate element of "foreignness". In all instances, they serve the contrary role to the white British subject, who is seen as the compassionate and educating leader, or rather the individuals capable of enjoying Empire brand goods. This distinction between the EMB's ideal British individuals belonging to a different class and society than lower non-white foreign beings is illustrated throughout these images at varying levels.

Having covered the EMB's uniform view of racial superiority within the colonies, it is clear these images highlight two varying subcategories embedded within the EMB's view of the Empire and its colonies. Images like "Borneo, Sago" are intended to "advertise foreignness" through a snapshot of the colonies people, culture, and

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<sup>151</sup> <sup>151</sup> "Borneo, Sago" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/12>; Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*.

landscapes. These images demonstrate colonists producing items for trade in order to reinforce the EMB's "Buy Empire" campaign. Furthermore, the EMB additionally desired viewers to believe the colonists in these posters were monetarily assisted simply through investment in British trade (Despite this financial gain never making an appearance in the images.). These images purposefully marketed "foreignness" in order to make the product seem exotic and exciting. However, the EMB also implied a myriad of concepts related to gender, class, and race in order to structure this vision of Empire. The counterpart category that includes "Colombo, Ceylon" and the "East African Transport" series is much more direct in its advertised themes. In these posters, the colonies are overseen directly by white British overseers. These benevolent depictions draw the notion that in these posters the colonists can only be further industrially evolved by assistance of the British Empire. For the rest of the posters illustrated within the EMB's "perception of the colonies", the images fall into one of these two categories.<sup>152</sup>

### **White British Benevolence**

To further expound on this overarching theme of "white British benevolence" within the EMB posters depicting the colonies, the aforementioned illustrator Adrian Paul Allinson, responsible for the "East-African Transport" series designed another image titled "Empire Tobacco From Northern Rhodesia & Nyasaland" (Figure 7.). The poster depicts an advert for Empire brand tobacco, shipped from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Both of which were once British protectorates during the Interwar Period. The illustration itself showcases a white British male in white fatigues crouching in a

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<sup>152</sup> "Colombo, Ceylon" *Empire Online*; "East-African Transport ~ Old Style" *Empire Online*; East-African Transport ~ New Style" *Empire Online*; "Borneo, Sago" *Empire Online*.

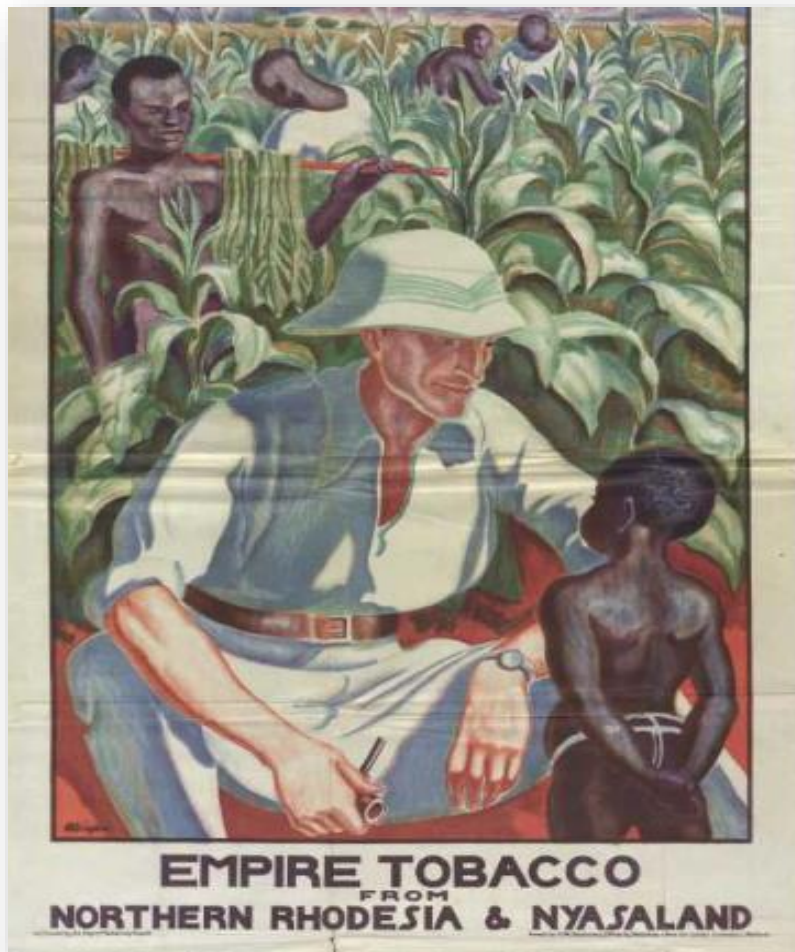
tobacco field. He wears a white hat and a pipe and sits smiling at a young black boy who curiously investigates him. A black man, presumably the younger boy's father, watches the interaction between the two in the foreground. In the backdrop, a series of black individuals (some clothed, some not) harvest tobacco from a field in Africa.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> “Empire Tobacco From Northern Rhodesia & Nyasaland” *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/5>

**Figure 7**

*“Empire Tobacco From Northern Rhodesia & Nyasaland”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Adrian Paul Allinson. Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Waterlow & Sons LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> “Empire Tobacco From Northern Rhodesia & Nyasaland” *Empire Online*.

“Empire Tobacco From Northern Rhodesia & Nyasaland” builds on the EMB’s continued theme of African and Empire interaction but presents a distinct iteration of white superiority. While this image, like others, does not deliberately state this theme, there is a clear clashing of realities between the workers and the white man who is presumably overseeing the operation. This image is based entirely on the themes, skin color and clothing. The deliberate highlighting of this in some ways draws even more clear lines of distinction between British imperial subjects and colonists in terms of understanding each other via race/class. For one, all the people visible are male. None of them have disproportionate or wildly drawn characteristics. In fact, all the renderings of people in the image make them look very human. However, there are some caveats to this, all of the individuals working the tobacco field are black. They are characteristically either barely clothed or have white shirts on. The young black child has nothing on except for a series of strings that act as underwear. This child symbolically looks to the only white man present. This person has all the amenities and comforts of industrial society. He wears a full white getup, belt, pipe, watch, and a hat, the only one to do so. The two individuals looking at each other appear to one another (and the viewer) as from being from completely different worlds. They are symbolized by the societies they are intended to represent, as well as the class they are to represent. Evidently, the man overseeing the tobacco operation is from a higher-class position. This portrayal paints British subjects in the light of being civilized, masculine, and commanding. Whereas it paints the protectorate subjects of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland as being the opposite. Not to mention the fact that the EMB’s depiction of colonists is once again the

same dark toned, featureless individual. Furthermore, the white British leader is smiling compassionately at the black child. It is an awkward and disjointed smile that speaks more meaning than simple nicety. This is curious on numerous levels. One possibility is that it implies a benevolent theme of Britain bringing prosperity to these impoverished people. However, it is also feasible that the symbolic smiling represents a continuation of the image's hierarchy of white British male overseer in charge of black foreigners working the fields. It is also possible the aim of the EMB illustration was to infer a parental relationship between the British Empire and its colonists. In either scenario, there is a deliberate casting of a societal vision. In this subgenre of British white individuals "enhancing" colonial affairs, there is an unmistakable aura of superiority that is thinly coated by the attitude of "responsibility."<sup>155</sup> From a global perspective, the omnipresence of these varied racial themes as demonstrated by the EMB has the potential to imply, even subliminally, equality differences in British subjects and those outside its borders.<sup>156</sup>

The EMB posters depicted certain colonies differently than others, although all received the signature EMB depiction of "white British benevolence". The "Colombo, Ceylon", the "East-African Transport" series, and "Empire Tobacco From Northern Rhodesia & Nyasaland" posters possessed these themes with subtle variations.<sup>157</sup> The examples from Africa are especially noteworthy. However, none of these posters were as transparent in their themes when compared to the 1929 Johnson Riddle & Co. EMB

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<sup>155</sup> Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*, 131-156; Ann Laura Stoler. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial*, 22-78.

<sup>156</sup> "Empire Tobacco From Northern Rhodesia & Nyasaland" *Empire Online*.

<sup>157</sup> "Colombo, Ceylon" *Empire Online*; "East-African Transport ~ Old Style" *Empire Online*; "East-African Transport ~ New Style" *Empire Online*; "Empire Tobacco From Northern Rhodesia & Nyasaland" *Empire Online*.

poster, “Smoke Empire Tobacco” (Figure 8.). The image illustrates a globe amidst the center of the visuals. Within the globe, the image of Africa as a continent is highlighted. This is the focal point of the image and all attention is immediately drawn to it. On this minimalistic portrayal of Africa, the demarcated segments of the British empires protectorates, territories, mandates, and colonies are highlighted. Above this is the representation of the sun, presumably to highlight that the sun never sets on the British empire. Below the globe, a British ship can be seen sailing the water. The bold-faced letters below this state clearly “Smoke Empire Tobacco”. However, the most distinctive feature of this image are the two men who stand on each side of the globe and its ornate plant-like stand. On the left, a white male British explorer stands resolute looking out over the globe and his counterpart. He holds a shovel that he has stuck into the ground. On the right side of the image, a black male stands looking at the white male and the globe. In his hands he holds a large tobacco leaf.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> “Smoke Empire Tobacco” *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/44>



**Figure 8**

*“Smoke Empire Tobacco”*



*Note.* EMB poster. Commissioned in 1929 and printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Johnson Riddle & Co. LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>159</sup> “Smoke Empire Tobacco” *Empire Online*.

In some ways, this image may be one of the most important declarations of the EMB's views. It is first important to note the intention of the image's design. Based on the posters contextual evidence, this is supposed to be a "partnership" between Britain and its colonies although, like many of the EMB's posters, peeling back that first layer speaks more plainly to its agendas and beliefs.<sup>160</sup> In the instances of this image, to some the word "partnership" or "agreement" may be relevant. However, the more apt wording might be "ownership" or "dominance". This chosen verbiage is not simply a result of a white against black racial conflict, but instead a complex medley of variables assembled by the image. To start with, the globe in the middle of the advert displays territories belonging to the British. These are highlighted in a Crimson red, whereas the continent of Africa is outlined in thick black lines (notably thicker than the globes). The chosen color of the British Empire's control over the land further enmeshes their enforced rulership. Having said this, the most telling pieces of EMB's distortion of race, class, and gender are represented by the two humans in the image. Each symbolizes the idealized stereotype of EMB's marketing campaigns. On the left, the romanticized, strong, blond hair, white male British explorer stands overlooking the globe and the black individual. He has one foot on a metal shovel in a symbolic gesture to represent Britain's responsibility to pitch in and help Africa.<sup>161</sup> The image telegraphs that the African continent needs help running their civilization. The white British official in the image is drawn as an alluring, strong male figure, whereas his counterpart, the impoverished black

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<sup>160</sup> Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*, 34.

<sup>160</sup> "Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958)." *AIM25 collection*; Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries*; Bernard Porter. *The Lion's Share*, 232-242.

<sup>161</sup> Barbara Bush. *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*, 131-156; Ann Laura Stoler. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 22-78.

male, represents his own set of unique characteristics. Aside from the fact that the EMB chose to use a black male to represent all of Africa, the individual displays many long-held racial stereotypes.<sup>162</sup> The man's black skin stands out, and his lips are overly large and ruby colored. His hair is the same color as his skin, and he is muscular, despite a rounded stomach (something the white male does not have). It is also essential to note that the man does not have any shoes and is carrying a tobacco leaf. These last two variables illustrate that he is poor and has the product the empire desires. There is no presence of the opposite sex and there is a transparent depiction that the British Empire belongs to a male spectrum. In images such as this, as well as others like the "East-African Transport" series, there is the demonstration that the British are bringing "civilization" and economic "progress" to colonized subjects. However, in reality the images also demonstrate that the benefits are minimal.<sup>163</sup> As David Cannadine suggests, the maintenance of Empire was based on class and economics.<sup>164</sup> While the ideas behind Empire and colonialism relied on humanitarian notions, these images also present that there is an equal reliance on the economic and racial hierarchies of the Empire and its colonial constituents.<sup>165</sup> It is worth noting that the British were not commonly interested in promoting cultural advance for colonized demographics. Instead, Briton officials were concerned that if Africans garnered too many semblances of European lifestyles, they would "detribalize".<sup>166</sup> Thus, in the image, the African individuals' outfit when compared to the European's suggest the African man has some element of "civilization but is still

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<sup>162</sup> Temitope Odumosu. *Africans in English Caricature*.

<sup>163</sup> "Smoke Empire Tobacco" *Empire Online*; "East-African Transport ~ Old Style" *Empire Online*; "East-African Transport ~ New Style" *Empire Online*.

<sup>164</sup> David Cannadine. *Ornamentalism*, 85-152.

<sup>165</sup> Antoinette M. Burton. *The Trouble with Empire*, 87-144; Barbara Bush. *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*, 72-100

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*.

inferior in status. In this sense, “Smoke Empire Tobacco”, is the perfect EMB image because it illustrates exactly who the Empire believed its citizens were, who was in the colonies, what their goals were, and which sex stood at the top. In essence, the production of this image is the ultimate appeal to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century elite white male and their highlighted privilege in British society.<sup>167</sup>

### **Advertising Foreignness**

Contrary to “white British Benevolence,” a number of the EMB colonial posters also feature a distinct lack of British presence. These EMB posters advertise foreignness as the primary motivator. There is no forced propaganda of British industrialization, improvement, nor themes relating to colonial parental-child archetypes. Instead, what is shown is a “view” of various colonies. Unfortunately, with the EMB’s strict adherence to how the British Empire should be portrayed, there is little celebration of culture. Instead, what was made available were illustrations that ignore the complexities of reality for favor of monetary gain. In this sense, topics of race, class, and gender are depicted differently in the absence of direct British influence. For instance, gender is represented differently in image “Gathering Cocoa Pods” (Figure 9.) when compared to the “East-African Transport”, which revolves around the theme of British involvement.<sup>168</sup>

“Gathering Cocoa Pods” is a 1928 Spencer Pryse illustration of West Africa. While not explicitly stated, it is likely the former British colony, the Gold Coast, which is

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<sup>167</sup> “Smoke Empire Tobacco” *Empire Online*.

<sup>168</sup> “Gathering Cocoa Pods” *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/18>; “East-African Transport ~ Old Style” *Empire Online*; “East-African Transport ~ New Style” *Empire Online*.

now a part of Ghana. Britain exported enormous amounts of cocoa annually from the Gold Coast during its time as a colony.<sup>169</sup> The image features a dense forested area in which many cocoa pods are being gathered by women. While some of the women appear to vary in age, they are within the bracket of young to middle aged. All of the women wear culturally symbolic pieces of clothing. This comes in the form of beaded necklaces, more traditional dresses, skirts, and head ties. A number of these women are carrying baskets of cocoa pods towards an unspecified location.<sup>170</sup>

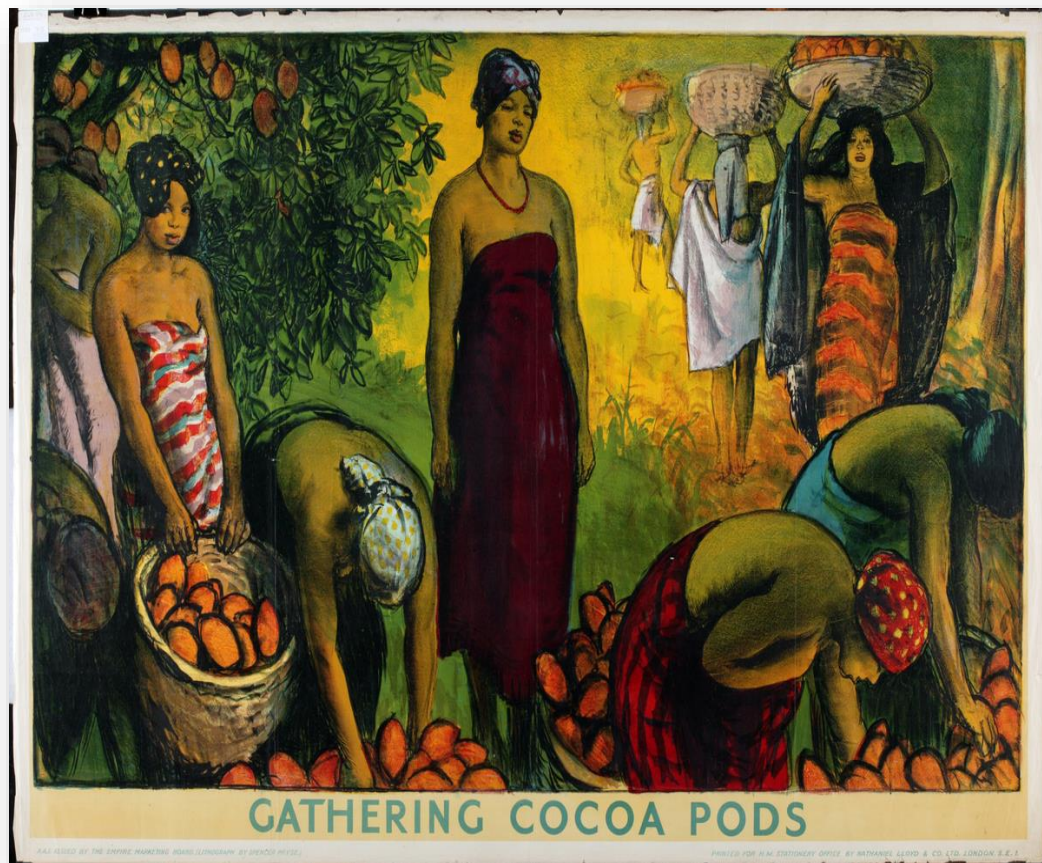
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<sup>169</sup> Rod Alence. "The 1937-1938 Gold Coast Cocoa Crisis: The Political Economy of Commercial Stalemate." *African Economic History*, no. 19 (1990): 77-104. Accessed April 16, 2021. doi:10.2307/3601893.

<sup>170</sup> "Gathering Cocoa Pods" *Empire Online*.

**Figure 9**

*“Gathering Cocoa Pods”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Gerald Spencer Pryse. Commissioned in 1928 and printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Nathaniel Lloyd & Co. LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>171</sup> “Gathering Cocoa Pods” *Empire Online*.

While some images from the EMB have been obvious or heavy handed in their biases concerning race, class, and gender, others are more subtle in their physical depiction of people. Western Africa during the Interwar period, and prior to its independence, had scattered levels of affluence.<sup>172</sup> Not all areas possessed elements of industrialization and as such, simple functioning processes such as the mode of farming in this image appear to have been commonplace. Since the Empire Marketing Board aimed to present the production of resources to British subjects, elements of this image appear to be fairly representational. Methods for harvesting are accurate, elements of traditional culture are present, and the landscape is characteristic of where cocoa pods would have been farmed.<sup>173</sup> Whether or not the dense forest is drawn to appeal to the romanticized outlook of foreign colonies is of debate. Issues with the image are not a result of its landscape. Instead, as has been the case with other adverts, the EMB's purpose in this image is flawed in its depiction of people. The only individuals harvesting the cocoa beans are all younger women, they are all minimally clothed, or rather, hold themselves in such a way as to show their backs/upper body. A number of women look curiously, almost gauging the viewer. Considering that this is a British poster and that other images feature the same consistent dark skin individuals all over Africa, it is believed that the intent is to make these individuals appear closer to white. The point being, the harvest of cocoa, a product that is often associated directly with the creation of chocolate, is geared in this image with an all-female cast of characters. It appears the Empire Marketing Board intentionally portrayed a younger, appealing in appearance, litany of women to harvest an inherently sweet product. There is no easily accessible

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<sup>172</sup> Ian Brown. *The Economies of Africa and Asia in the Inter-War Depression* (Taylor & Francis, 2014), 79

<sup>173</sup> Gwendolyn Mikell. *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana First edition* (New York: Paragon House, 1989).



historical indicator to depict that West African harvest of Cocoa was to be done solely by women, rather there is a long history of child and general lower-class labor.<sup>174</sup> From this sense, the image seems to use sex appeal to move product. To make matters more troublesome, the women are black, fair skinned, younger individuals. While this depiction is neither accurate nor inaccurate in representing women in Western Africa, the implications complicate the perception of black females living in Briton. Historically, there has been a longstanding issue with the sexualization and objectification of black women and girls in all manner of society.<sup>175</sup> The continued effort to exploit this demographic has made them the victims of terrible assault, assertion of authority, white dominance, and lessened credibility in societal features.<sup>176</sup> Images like the one provided here, despite being relatively tame, aid in reinforcing this notion of intersectionality gender harassment. If one were a black, female, British subject viewing this colonial advert, their outlook would be completely different than the traditional white male. This separation of thinking when designing these posters would easily in this instance conform to the comfort of one racial demographic over another. The black demographic likely feeling akin to being disenfranchised or belittled in their role within society. Considering this, images like “Gathering Cocoa Pods”, may not be wildly overt or outrageous,

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<sup>174</sup> Gwendolyn Mikell. *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana*; Rod Alence. “The 1937-1938 Gold Coast Cocoa Crisis” *African Economic History*.

<sup>175</sup> Ann Laura Stoler. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 79-111; Rachel Ama Asaa Engmann, “Under Imperial Eyes, Black Bodies, Buttocks, and Breasts: British Colonial Photography and Asante ‘Fetish Girls.’” *African arts* 45, no. 2 (2012): 46–57.

<sup>176</sup> Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference.” *Copeland Colloquium*, Amherst College, 1980 [https://www.colorado.edu/odece/sites/default/files/attached-files/rba09-sb4converted\\_8.pdf](https://www.colorado.edu/odece/sites/default/files/attached-files/rba09-sb4converted_8.pdf).



however, what they communicate without being explicit speaks volumes about the publisher and the desired target audience.<sup>177</sup>

Similarly, to “Gathering Cocoa Pods”, another poster by Spencer Pryse created a year earlier in 1927 also displays EMB gender views alongside race and class.<sup>178</sup> The image depicts individuals picking tea leaves and depositing them within large sacks attached to each person's back. The poster portrays Ceylon tea fields. Ceylon is a former British colony that has since become Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is located in South Asia and hosts a wide collection of ethnic and racial demographics. Aside from this, the illustration depicts the setting of the sun. Vibrant bright and dark colors are cast on the individuals, the fields, and the backdrops rolling hills as it becomes evening. The primary figure, who the viewers focus is naturally drawn to, is a woman (center image) who looks back at the viewer. She is expressionless, bordering on quizzical or discontented.<sup>179</sup>

“Tea picking in Ceylon” (Figure 10.) portrays exactly its title. While it is evidently based on Ceylon, little to no culture or colonial progress is present. Instead, a series of colonists carefully toil away in a seemingly remote field. Comparatively to other EMB’s images, “Tea Picking in Ceylon” is by no means overtly outrageous in its representation of Ceylon’s people. The colors are vivid and paint the land in beautiful, relaxing hues. Picturesque, rolling mountain ranges illustrate a wide open, adventurous and exciting land. There is even a fair netting of roles portrayed in the image. There are several women, a child (judging based on the height of the basket in proportion to their

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<sup>177</sup> “Gathering Cocoa Pods” *Empire Online*; Ayesu Ebenezer, Francis Gbormittah, and Kwame Adum-Kyeremeh. “British Colonialism and Women's Welfare in the Gold Coast Colony.” *Africa Today*.

<sup>178</sup> “Tea Picking in Ceylon” *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/35>

<sup>179</sup> “Gathering Cocoa Pods” *Empire Online*; “Tea Picking in Ceylon” *Empire Online*.

body), and a male in the front. At the very least, a passerby in Britton would likely not feel isolated or influenced by the image. Issues with this EMB poster, particularly its concerns over race, gender, and class lay in its generic properties. The people here are all nondescript, they possess no unique characteristics and have no detail to represent their faces. The exception to this rule being the lead female standing in the foreground. This woman, whose face is viewable bears a positively neutral expression, possibly even discontent. Her physical features are slender and are made more revealing as a result of her clothing. Since this woman is the primary focal point of the image, it is believed that she is meant to create a sexual allure for viewers. Albeit for the female Briton, it is also possible to associate with this image and see a nondescript hard-working woman in the colonies (as there are multiple in the image). However, initial impressions see the individuals as once more consistently the same skin color, possessing non-descript features, as well as a potential appeal to sexuality through the lead women. This continues the EMB's theme of slotting colonists and anyone outside Britain into easily recognizable, often binary categories.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> "Tea Picking in Ceylon" *Empire Online*.

**Figure 10**

*“Tea Picking in Ceylon”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Gerald Spencer Pryse. Commissioned in 1927 and printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Vincent Brooks, Day & Son, LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> "Tea Picking in Ceylon" *Empire Online*.

However, in an effort to not completely vilify the EMB, there were also a small quantity of illustrators that did make efforts to portray reality, despite the vision of the EMB's "Buy Empire" slogan. As an example, the image "Timber Stacking" (Figure 11.) depicts a young dark-skinned worker sitting atop an elephant stacking timber. In the background a large factory pumps out emissions whilst other elephant equipped, and standard workers move about. The image is presumably a depiction of a lumber yard in the British colony of Burma, which is now Myanmar. The respective buildings in the image are all a porcelain white with blue windows that complement the hazy blue sky. Various palm trees and the hint of a forest in the backdrop suggest the hotter appearance of tropic regions in Southeast Asia.<sup>182</sup> At a cursory glance, the elements of "Timber Stacking" do not appear drastically different than other colonial themed posters.

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<sup>182</sup> "Timber Stacking" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/32>

**Figure 11**

*“Timber Stacking”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Ba Nyan. Commissioned in 1935 and printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Eyre & Spottiswoode LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>183</sup> “Timber Stacking” *Empire Online*.

“Timber Stacking” does, however, complicate the EMB’s routine view in a number of ways. The most important is that the illustrator, Ba Nyan, was a Burmese painter famed for his wide array of oil paintings, many of which feature simple features with brilliant vibrant displays of color and unique stylings.<sup>184</sup> Ba Nyan is different from the typical structure that the EMB adheres to in commissioning its artists. Nearly all the artists were white Britons commissioned to portray colonies that they had likely never lived in or physically seen. In turn, these illustrators would be the same ones to produce images that represented the Empire and its assets. As such, the black caricatures, poor representation of colonies, and highlighted “British supremacy” ideals, were created by differing white illustrators with differing backgrounds. It is not evident if the EMB purposely urged the incorporation of these notions directly, however, while they came together under the EMB, it is evident they were allowed to use their own unique designs, methods, and stylings.<sup>185</sup> This means that the portrayals of these people were likely their own held perceptions, or at least an attempt to please the EMB. In any event, as is seen by the adverts publications, the images were clearly produced for their content.

Ba Nyan broke this mold in the sense that not only is he distant from British mainland, but he is a Burmese commissioned to work for the EMB.<sup>186</sup> His depiction of elephants stacking timber is of his homeland and not simply a depiction of British colonies. Clearly the EMB’s marketing motive was to encapsulate colonial production of goods to urge empire subjects to purchase more. EMB impression is to demonstrate the

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<sup>184</sup> Karim Raslan, *Journeys through Southeast Asia: Ceritalah 2*. Singapore: Times Books International, 2002.

<sup>185</sup> While this is not explicitly said in any of the digitized documents or supplemental secondary readings, it is inferable due to the vast differences in styles and techniques seen in the EMB’s collection.

<sup>186</sup> There is a lot of information made available as to who he was, where he went, and his legacy. However, little information could be found concerning how he came to work for the EMB, other than that he did in 1935; Karim Raslan. *Journeys through Southeast Asia: Ceritalah 2*.

physical production process is supposed to be exciting, foreign, and to give the notion that buying these products allows colonists to have more work. Under this directive, Ba Nyan paints a Burmese industrial factory and its workers. It is worth noting here that there are clear signs of prosperity and industrial progress in this image. Silos, factory columns, pipes, and their integration into the architecture symbolize the usage of contemporary evolutions. To add to this, Ba Nyan's usage of elephants to stack timber demonstrates the merger of both these worlds and their respective techniques. Furthermore, the representation of the workers is justified. They are fair skinned with white hands, soft facial features and are fully clothed. Each of the individuals are unique as are their physical features. It is worth noting that the primary worker is Asian and those not visible are simply human. Ba Nyan's EMB feature is a colonial depiction that fits the companies desires, however, equally paints Burma in a fashion that is not completely foreign. The exception being the presence of elephants lifting timber. Images like this, while not inherently racially loaded, go forth to further highlight the flaws and clear misconceptions that other illustrators have created when perceiving colonial imagery, its occupants, and their respective cultures.<sup>187</sup>

After analyzing a myriad of EMB posters that center themselves on the perception of the colonies, there are a lengthy number that demonstrate loaded perceptions as it relates to race, class, and gender. Whether it be through the uniform coloring of all colonized peoples of the British Empire, drawing them with non-descript/overly exaggerated features, casting all individuals as poor, or simply eliminating most

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<sup>187</sup> Karim Raslan. *Journeys through Southeast Asia: Ceritalah 2*. Singapore: Times Books International, 2002.

"Timber Stacking" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/32>

appearances by women. The EMB details to its British constituents, and the world, a clear message. If one was a “British citizen”, this meant that one was white, typically male (female if one was buying an Empire product), belonged to the upper class and held interest in the British Empire. Any outside of this is never pictured as reaping the rewards of Empire.<sup>188</sup> In this sense, the EMB abetted a racialized culture due to the fact that its “Buy Empire” posters condoned marginalizing groups. Although, the posters also aided in promoting a sense of privilege to an elite Briton who was privileged enough to *not* be poorly represented in them. The highlighting of this class of individuals demonstrated who was privy to Empire goods, and subsequently who was not. This was made especially apparent in the images that depict the idealized “British subject”.

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<sup>188</sup> Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*, 34.



## Chapter 5

### British Subjects at Home

The Empire Marketing Board (EMB) had established a wide variety of goals and plans that would in theory further promote intra-Empire trade.<sup>189</sup> In order for the EMB to have such strong views of foreign entities, it would logically make sense that there would be an equally strong, if not stronger, vision for citizens in Britain.<sup>190</sup> Effectively, this rings true considering that there is a near equal volume of unique posters to promote the Empire within Britain itself. However, just like the EMB's colonial posters, the EMB's view of "British subjects at home" is correspondingly loaded in its themes. Albeit, unlike chapter four where individuals were routinely belittled, these posters aimed to place a romanticized vision of the ideal British subject. In many semblances this vision would prove fiscally unreachable and further highlight the existing issues of race, class, and gender confronting British Interwar Period society.<sup>191</sup>

Ultimately, it can be contended that for the average lower- or middle-class British subject, the affairs of the Empire dealt with foreign topics and that had little implication in the ongoings of standard life.<sup>192</sup> However, the British Empire was an omnipresent facet of the British government whose presence had existed far prior to the lives of Interwar Period individuals. While it is feasible the Empire did not resonate with these classes as much, it certainly mattered to elite Britons. The EMB's intended goal, as it was for its

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<sup>189</sup> Karl Hack, "Selling Empire." *OpenLearn*; "Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958)." *AIM25 collection*.

<sup>190</sup> Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*"; Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge*..

<sup>191</sup> Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain*; Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*.

<sup>192</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*; John Darwin. "Imperialism and the Victorians" *English Historical Review*; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*; Ashley Kristen Bower, "Rebranding Empire".

colonial posters, was to relate to both these demographics in order to promote Empire trade.<sup>193</sup> Based on the quantity of the posters made available, even when the EMB made efforts to portray the standard Briton, the majority of unique illustrations catered to an elite visual that likely supported the EMB. This reveals that the EMB's perception of its subjects, like most societies, was hierarchical and desired the attention of those with the most affluence and influence.<sup>194</sup> The images in this chapter highlight the EMB's perceived "model" of the British subject.

To start with, an exemplary image that brings forth some of the more predominant themes within the EMB agenda can be found in the 1928 poster "Gibraltar" (Figure 12.) by Chas Pears. The image undeniably takes place in the presence of a British colony, however, its focus is on British subjects instead of indigenous peoples. The poster depicts the Rock of Gibraltar, the opening of the Mediterranean Sea, and the subsequent British territory of Gibraltar. The image revels in the themes of a vacation getaway. In the far background a glistening white, almost utopian in appearance, town is drawn. A wide variety of vessels sail the waters, including small sailboats, tugboats, and an ironclad navy or fishing ship. The waters are calm and are pleasantly illustrated in an effort to complement the baby blue sky and brightly lit geographical features of the Rock of Gibraltar. For viewers of the image, the focal point remains in the foreground where a passenger vessel carries a vacationing family to the British territory. The family is white and consist of a younger male and female, likely in their twenties or thirties. They also

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<sup>193</sup> Karl Hack, "Selling Empire." *OpenLearn*; "Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958)." *AIM25 collection*; Ashley Kristen Bower, "Rebranding Empire".

<sup>194</sup> David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 85-136; Ashley Kristen Bower, "Rebranding Empire"; Higgins, David, and Brian Varian, "The Economic Failure of Britain's Empire Marketing Board." *VOX, CEPR Policy Portal*; John Darwin. "Imperialism and the Victorians"

have beside them a young girl, who is presumably their child. They are well dressed and appear to belong to middle to upper class society.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> "Gibraltar" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/29>.

**Figure 12**

*“Gibraltar”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Chas Pears. Commissioned in 1928 and printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Johnson Riddle & Co. LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> “Gibraltar” *Empire Online*.

In many ways, this image is categorically different from a lot of EMB's posters. In fact, it is largely the complete opposite. It is not advertising a specific commodity, resource, or trade. There is no presence of the traditional EMB scripted "black" foreigner or standard worker. There is also no advertising of food or industrialized products. Instead, there is a very traditionally white family that are being advertised as going on vacation. This image is crucially important to understanding the EMB's Briton. Gibraltar is portrayed as pleasant and different enough from British mainland, yet it still encapsulates that colonial spirit of adventure through its Spanish roots and architecture. However, the family is the most striking element of the poster. They are white, have all the makings of moderate to notable affluence and consist of the perfect "nuclear model". This being the husband, wife, and child. Having detailed this, the illustration of the families details speaks to additional dimensions. The first being the EMB's vacationing male. He is blond, has a distinctive jaw line and sharp features. He is thin but not emaciated, and is fully clothed, including shoes. Articles of distinct white clothing are something all of the family members share. His face is the only one visible of the three individuals depicted. Symbolically, his head is level with the territory on the far right of the image (his being on the left). Neither fat nor too thin, the EMB's male subject is purposefully drawn with handsome features and no imperfections. The wife is essentially the female counterpart to this imagery. She has flawless, light brown skin, and long slender legs. She, like the man, is thin, but not emaciated and looks out to Gibraltar. Her face is not visible to the viewer. Out of the three figures, she is the only sitting. This conveys the message that vacation is for the mother/homecare figure to rest while the husband parents. The presumed daughter has the least number of features and is on the

whole generic. Her head is completely obscured by a white sun cap, she has a white shirt, skirt, and white boots on. She stands next to the husband and in front of the mother looking out at the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>197</sup>

Even though this is a 20<sup>th</sup> century advert, the family envisioned here excludes many people. The most obvious distinction is in terms of race. The EMB's depiction of Gibraltar is the only image used to convey the empire as having locations ideal for vacation. As such, the ideal family here is white. They are who the EMB desires to have travel to these destinations, as well as believes can afford a trip such as this. Furthermore, their class is entirely signifying of an upper echelon, the type of people who could afford to take vacations. Ideally, as other historians like Bernard Porter and Andrew Thompson would have suggested, empire may have mattered little to the commonplace and poor demographics.<sup>198</sup> Elite Britons, who would have had an interest in Imperial affairs, could have likely associated and desired the content of this image, including the breadwinner husband, the caregiver wife, and the obedient daughter. For the EMB this is the ideal citizen, who could afford the luxuries of colonial pleasure. Whether or not demographics met this reality is of question, however, to have the government endorse this mode of thinking is to influence the masses. In this example, much like many within this chapter, the EMB's views of society exclude many from being "ideal British citizens".<sup>199</sup>

In almost all other cases when middle or lower-class British subjects are presented they are workers and are notably all black, unless a romanticized image of the Empire is the focus. As a result, an elite "model" of the British citizen is made prominent

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<sup>197</sup> "Gibraltar" *Empire Online*.

<sup>198</sup> Gary Bryan Magee, and Andrew S. Thompson *Empire and Globalisation*; Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 194-226.

<sup>199</sup> "Gibraltar" *Empire Online*.

throughout the EMB's posters. This model traditionally consists of an idealized white upper class "breadwinner". This imagery is stressed by the EMB as being entirely based in British Imperial history and its lead political figures.

A multi poster series by Fred Taylor capitalizes on these themes by highlighting the British Empire's most "significant" leaders. They are part of the 1930 "Empire Builders" series. The first, "Empire Builders - Cabot To Clive" (Figure 13.) offers a rather simple illustration of famous historical rulers and explorers in British Imperial history. The figures are shown standing together and looking towards the viewer. They are all dressed in their period specific clothing. In the second image "Empire Builders - Cook To Rhodes" (Figure 14.), another set of famous rulers/explorers are shown. Like the previous image, the individuals presented here are the natural historical continuation of English explorers and leaders that cultivated the contemporary perception of empire all the way into the Interwar period.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> "Empire Builders - Cabot To Clive" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/7>; "Empire Builders - Cook To Rhodes" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/9>.

**Figure 13**

*“Empire Builders Cabot to Clive”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Fred Taylor. Commissioned in 1928 and printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Waterlow & Sons LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>201</sup>

<sup>201</sup> Empire Builders - Cabot To Clive” *Empire Online*.



**Figure 14**

*“Empire Builders Cook to Rhodes”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Fred Taylor. Commissioned in 1930 and printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Waterlow & Sons LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>202</sup>

<sup>202</sup> “Empire Builders - Cook To Rhodes” *Empire Online*.

This is an interesting two-part set for several reasons. What is presented by the EMB here is a collection of the most inspiring, noteworthy, and successful individuals in British history. These figures are the literal “Empire builders” and are set up very much to be historical role models in the poster. Lining all of these men up single file speaks volumes. For one, they are arranged by time which means that the beliefs they espouse are upheld throughout the ages. All of these “leaders” are notably male, white, and largely held positions as elites in society. As such, these empire builders are supposed to embody what the empire is composed of and the ideals it is supposed to represent. Since these are British leaders or explorers, they are people who sought the need to command or desired the thrill of adventure. In this line up, the EMB implies important themes. In order to take part and contribute to the empire, one must be white, male, and part of the elite class. Unless one is imbued with notions of nationalism or sense of pride in history, it might be difficult for the viewer to associate with the figures in these images. Particularly if you were a woman or belonged to a race that was not white. In essence, the image set “Empire Builders” presents exactly who the EMB viewed as having constructed the British Empire. These images are tools to promote nationalism, however it is also an outline of who could and could not appreciate this sense of intertwined Imperial identity.<sup>203</sup>

Like “Gibraltar” and the “Empire Builder” series there is a high level of exclusivity in these images that does not make any effort to promote marginalized classes. In turn, the posters praise British elites who subscribed to more traditional notions of the family. This is made abundantly clear in further EMB British posters that

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<sup>203</sup> “Empire Builders - Cabot To Clive” *Empire Online*; “Empire Builders - Cook To Rhodes” *Empire Online*.

directly advertise products. The poster “Buy Empire Every Day” (Figure 15.) by R.T. Cooper, is an ideal case where clear gender, class, and race norms are used to advertise EMB products. In the image, the EMB makes its proposal to purchase products (notably tea and canned salmon) in a number of ways. First, it provides a series of comparison-based texts. In 1873, the first shipment of tea was sent from the colony of Ceylon. In 1876, the first canned salmon was received from Canada. The image states at the bottom in massive text the message “Buy Empire Every Day.” It further claims that in 1929, Ceylon sent out 250,000,000 lbs. of tea and Canada sent out 60,000,000 lbs. of Salmon in the same year. To reinforce this unabashed claim of imperial progress, two middle class families are shown enjoying tea and canned salmon. They are all white and vary in age and gender. The advertisement of foreign and therefore exotic goods is still prominent in this type of poster, despite the focus being on British subjects.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> “Buy Empire Every Day” *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/10>.

**Figure 15**

*“Buy Empire Every Day”*



*Note.* EMB poster by R.T. Cooper. Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Waterlow & Sons LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>205</sup> “Buy Empire Every Day” *Empire Online*.

This image states a lot by what it does not say. “Buy Empire Every Day” speaks solely to the progress of the British Empire over time and what that progress meant for its subjects. In this specific image, nothing is shown relating to the colonies except for the names Ceylon and Canada. It is only inferred that by having trade with these colonies, British subjects are able to enjoy goods from them. The families enjoying the produced trade are varied somewhat; however, judging by their outfits, jewelry, furniture, and amenities, they are middle to upper class elites. For the intent of analyzing this piece, they will be split into two categories, tea and canned salmon. The family that is enjoying empire brand Ceylon tea is all white, middle aged and elderly. In this part of the image a man sips tea while his presumed housewife pours more for one of their sets of parents. The elderly couple is graying in areas, which indicates a higher mortality rate. These details are important to note because it details the classes that had investment in Empire-related goods, like medicines and the materials to make them. These same people are also likely those that could be influenced by the racial stereotypes in the EMB images.<sup>206</sup>

The other half of the image presents a middle-aged family opening a can of salmon. The salmon family comprise a husband, wife, and two children. In the image, the husband is struggling with the can of salmon while the wife looks expectantly at him. The two children look at the can of food as it is about to be served. Similar in themes to the tea family, this side of the image also details gender roles amongst class distinctions. For one, the wife is looking to the husband to provide food for the family.<sup>207</sup> Whereas the male is expected to provide for his family. In addition to this, by looking at the clothing of this family it is inferable that they belong to a middle or upper middle class. There are

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<sup>206</sup> “Buy Empire Every Day” *Empire Online*.

<sup>207</sup> Scott Anthony. *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*, 34

no adverts relating to the availability of imported canned salmon for the poor and no adverts positively featuring black individuals enjoying tea and salmon imports. Even if these goods were made available to everyone in the country, the existence of these adverts implies that the EMB sought to cater to specific demographics. This imbued sense of privilege that was intertwined with nationalism and identity is part of why racially loaded advertisements have been tolerated for so long.<sup>208</sup>

Posters such as “Buy Empire Every Day” are effective in establishing who the EMB’s audience are and who was to enjoy and purchase the Empire’s goods.<sup>209</sup> As Secretary to the EMB, Stephen Tallents stated, EMB goods should be made available so that items, “...in the shop window or on the counter, may be fitted to win the *housewife’s critical eye*.”<sup>210</sup> The EMB from its outset recreated the virtue from 20<sup>th</sup> century British society that it was the male British constituents who worked for and produced in the Empire’s name, whereas those who were in charge of purchasing these goods for the elite British family belonged to the female-housewife role. Once more, illustrator Fred Taylor further sculpts these views and more in his “A Country Grocer’s Shop” (Figure 16.). The deceptively simple image depicts a standard grocer in what is presumed to be a village shop in Britain.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> “Buy Empire Every Day” *Empire Online*

<sup>209</sup> “Buy Empire Every Day” *Empire Online*.

<sup>210</sup> Scott Anthony. *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*, 34

<sup>211</sup> “Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958).” *AIM25 collection*; Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries*; “A Country Grocer’s Shop” *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/36>



**Figure 16**

*“A Country Grocer’s Shop”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Fred Taylor. Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Waterlow & Sons LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> “A Country Grocer’s Shop” *Empire Online*.

The shop is geared to be nondescript and therefore representative of any location in Britain. The image is also fashioned to promote the trade acquired from colonial goods. This could mean varied fruits, vegetables, spices, grains, and other varied products. Each of which is portrayed in large abundance within the shop. The products have large, bolded title text above each of their respective items to signify which colony they came from (i.e., canned goods from Australia, Ceylon tea, Jamaican Bananas, Sierra Leone Ginger, etc.). Helming the shop is a middle-aged white, male, shopkeeper who is measuring how much of a specified product to give to his two customers, two additional white women who assume the role of mother and daughter. These individuals (including the shopkeeper) further represent British citizens and a series of roles within the empire. Despite the location of a rural or countryside shop, the attire of the women and shopkeeper suggest a respectable position in society, one that is certainly not poor or struggling.<sup>213</sup>

“A Country Grocer’s Shop” mimics these perceptions of British citizens in two differing ways, the purchasers and the distributor (the shopkeeper). In both the backdrop and foreground, one can see New Zealand oranges, Tasmanian apples, Jamaican bananas, and boxes marked India, Ceylon, that are all stocked to the brim. The viewer's attention is drawn to the focal point of the room wherein the white, neatly dressed shopkeeper measures and weighs product. The point is stressed that he purchases his goods directly from the Empire. To add to this, the man has the same combed over, blonde hair and semi-stern expression that images like “Gibraltar” cast for the EMB’s white provider/businessman. It is worth noting that the illustrator of “A Country Grocer’s

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<sup>213</sup> “A Country Grocer’s Shop” *Empire Online*.



Shop”, different from “Gibraltar”. A British merchant who could view this image could easily associate it with the desire to fill their stores with brightly colored, exotic, and rare colonial imports. Under the EMB, this presumption operates only under the condition one has both money and is a white male. Others who fall outside of this type of citizenry may feel disenchanting or unable to attain these spoils.<sup>214</sup>

Aside from the shopkeeper, other roles are highlighted in the image, standing in front of the shopkeeper measuring goods is the receiving shopper. In this image, this character type is fulfilled by two white women. Judging by their clothes and physical appearances, one is the mother and the other is her child, who appears relatively uninterested in the shopkeeper’s business. Both women are drawn to be expressionless, a significant difference compared to the shopkeeper. However, they both wear nicer, vividly colored clothing. These are the only two other individuals in the shop and symbolically suggest that the recipient of the empire goods is none other than the white elite class homemaker/caregiver figures. The EMB makes it clear in this example that this is a role to be embodied by women.<sup>215</sup> Like the shopkeeper, the roles set by the EMB are restrictive in terms of race, class, and agender outside of this demographic may have felt disenfranchised or not cared for by the empire and their supply, even if on the smallest subliminal level.<sup>216</sup>

In the EMB’s vision of “British subjects at home”, there is a steady catering towards a more affluent society Or those wishing to be or having pretensions to higher social standing. However, this does not mean that the EMB and its poster campaign

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<sup>214</sup> “A Country Grocer’s Shop” *Empire Online*.

<sup>215</sup> Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*, 34.

<sup>216</sup> “A Country Grocer’s Shop” *Empire Online*; “Gibraltar” *Empire Online*.

neglected to pay attention to the British layman or the average middle- or lower-class worker. Several images offer a more representative view of the EMB's British citizens. In fact, there are several significant similarities between these posters and that of colonial themes. In the first of two separate images, Gerald Spencer Pryse, famed illustrator for the EMB and BEE exhibition, created an important piece titled "Sorting Manganese Ore" (Figure 17.) in 1928.<sup>217</sup> "Sorting Manganese Ore" is an image portraying a series of black workers who are watching manganese ore be processed. The ore itself is on a makeshift conveyor belt and appears to be about to enter/leave a mechanical press. The location is an industrialized plant. It is also possible that it serves some additional function as a shop. On the far left a man stands next to a desk. As a product, manganese ore is mined in massive quantities and then sorted by hand before being crushed. After it is crushed it is examined before exporting. It is the most likely that this is what these individuals in the picture are doing. Manganese ore is sorted, crushed, and formed for its use in creating alloys for iron and steel. Typically, its main mode of production is for steelmaking, and as such, would have been an important resource for the British Empire.<sup>218</sup> While it is difficult to pin down the exact location of the image, the likely candidates come to Britain itself, and possibly British Guiana. British Guiana was a British colony in Central America (now modern-day Guyana)<sup>219</sup> and was prominent in its manganese ore production. It is not a guarantee that the ore being processed is in these locations as it is possible that it could be in any colony that the empire decided to set up shop in.

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<sup>217</sup> "Sorting Manganese Ore" *Empire Online*, April 7, <https://www-empire-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/41>

<sup>218</sup> "Manganese - Element Information" Manganese - Element information, properties and uses, *Periodic Table*. Accessed April 16, 2021. <https://www.rsc.org/periodic-table/element/25/manganese>.

<sup>219</sup> Odeen Ishmael, *The Guyana Story: from Earliest Times to Independence* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2013), 129-490.

However, judging on the variety and type of clothing made available to the workers, including the “shopkeeper”, it is more likely the ore being processed is in Britain in an undetermined location.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> “Sorting Manganese Ore” *Empire Online*; “British Guiana - Colonial Geological Surveys 1947–1956.” *Earthwise*. Accessed April 16, 2021.  
[http://earthwise.bgs.ac.uk/index.php/British\\_Guiana\\_%E2%80%94\\_Colonial\\_Geological\\_Surveys\\_1947%E2%80%931956](http://earthwise.bgs.ac.uk/index.php/British_Guiana_%E2%80%94_Colonial_Geological_Surveys_1947%E2%80%931956).

**Figure 17**

*“Sorting Manganese Ore”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Gerald Spencer Pryse. Commissioned in 1928 and printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Nathaniel Lloyd & Co. LTD. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> “Sorting Manganese Ore” *Empire Online*.

Regardless of its specific location, the image “Sorting Manganese Ore” is a prime representative of the EMB’s omission of the lower classes in the British Empire. The location is not specified to the viewer, so without this pivotal geographic information, the manganese plant could be anywhere within the empire’s colonies or its mainland territories. This means that passersby (that are likely in Britain itself) only see the bold-faced texts “Sorting Manganese Ore” which is accompanied by the image of black men stooped over rough unrefined ore. Even the “wealthier” higher class individual in the image, this being the shopkeeper/manager is black. This is notably comparable to the poster “Colombo, Ceylon”. Considering the Empire Marketing Board traditionally published images where the colonies were lacking modern industrialization, it is feasible this image took place in Britain. This is primarily reinforced by the wide variety of clothing, accessories, and wealth represented by the “shopkeeper-manager” and his workers. All of which wear the same uniform hats. The clothing of these black workers is universally different from the “culturally” portrayed garb of the EMB’s lower class colonial posters. This continues to strengthen that the westernized clothing these men wear is indicative of British customs. Fundamentally this is important when comparing the EMB’s portrayals of British mainland and its subjects. Such examples show white subjects enjoying goods, going on vacations, or working less labor intensive, higher paying positions, like running/owning stores. “Gibraltar”, “A Country Grocer’s Shop”, or “Buy Empire Everyday” showcase exactly these norms. Comparing these to “Sorting Manganese Ore”, a clear picture is painted by the EMB that in 20th century Britain, those who could amount to high paying positions and those who could enjoy empire products were a white male populace. Those who cultivated those products (as is particularly seen

in the colonial production posters) are hardworking black individuals who are subject to far more diminished conditions. From the EMB's standpoint, this was the order of the empire and its ideal working-class system. Since the design of the poster is intentionally vague, what this suggests to the viewer is that these nondescripts, impoverished black men are the universal picture of the "British worker."<sup>222</sup>

Just the same, the image "Empire Builders" (Figure 18.) conducts similar themes from a different standpoint. The image is part of Fred Taylor's five piece set that includes the "Empire Builders - Cabot to Clive" and "Cook to Rhodes" posters. The poster was purposefully separated from this set and depicted here due to its distinct presentation of British workers. The image focus on a British mainland port where a massive ironclad transport freighter has arrived and is unloading cargo. The illustration is exciting and filled with frantic movement. Crews of all different fashions move imported goods to and fro. Massive steel red cranes lift the objects above their heads. In the foreground either a manager or dock worker directs a crane and its movement. In the far background, a train has arrived beside the freighter.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> "Sorting Manganese Ore" *Empire Online*; "A Country Grocer's Shop" *Empire Online*; "Buy Empire Every Day" *Empire Online*; "Gibraltar" *Empire Online*.

<sup>223</sup> "Empire Builders" *Empire Online*.

**Figure 18**

*“Empire Builders”*



*Note.* EMB poster by Fred Taylor. Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Thos. Forman & Sons. Image archived at *Empire Online*.<sup>224</sup>

<sup>224</sup> “Empire Builders” *Empire Online*.

What is displayed here for the EMB's "Empire Builders" is a fantastic tribute to the accomplishments of the industrial era. Massive pieces of mechanical wonder dwarf the human element in this image, even the train appears small. There is an evident testament here to the portrayed apparent success and importance of the British empire. Were this a piece that represented all manners of people, it would be the perfect instance of marketing the empire as a whole to British subjects. However, it is likely then that it would not fit in with the EMB's posters. There are loaded issues with the representation of race, class, and gender amongst the lower class in this poster, similar to that of "Sorting Manganese Ore". The human element in this image is attributable to solely three factors, everyone present (and there are a lot of people), are white, male, and middle to lower class. Additionally, all of the presented humans are generic and non-descript they have on either westernized plain worker garb (slacks, shirts, overalls, etc.) and hats (fedoras, flat caps, etc.). Alternatively, others bear all of these features and are shirtless. There is an abundant aura of masculinity and nationalism in this poster. Furthermore, what is interesting about this image is that the EMB is advertising that the empire is important to middle- and lower-class individuals, it advertises jobs and resources. Historians like Bernard Porter assert that this is the same classification of people that cared the least about the empire.<sup>225</sup> There is evidence here that at least in some semblance the government reached out to this demographic to emphasize the importance of this role. At a surface level, if a white male individual had seen this image they could take nationalistic pride in the sense that they were helping build their government for the better. Coupled with the EMB's other "Empire Builders" images that depict rulers and

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<sup>225</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*.



explorers as constructors, the “average” worker could now see themselves as the next step in this glorified lineage. Although, in the image there is also a complete absence of gender, as well as any race that is not generic, nondescript white. This excludes an enormous amount of people in favor of this specific idealized British worker. This is an interesting contrasting thought to the EMB’s portrayal of “Sorting Manganese Ore”, that had black individuals doing menial grunt labor.<sup>226</sup> The primary differences in these two images is that the roles held by black individuals were not romanticized anywhere near the level of “Empire Builders”.<sup>227</sup>

Whether it presented average lower- and middle-class British workers or the higher echelons of British society, the EMB’s “Buy Empire” poster campaign offers compelling images of the ideal “British subject.”. Similar in nature to the EMB’s perception of the colonies, its outlook on even its own citizens was highly critical. It is in part true that a lot of these EMB attitudes originate in its grounding as an Imperial program led by Imperialists that supported the British Empire.<sup>228</sup> With the advent of anti-colonialism alongside a myriad of other popularized Interwar Period ideals, reactionary programs like the EMB strove to uphold the notions of Empire and the society it had constructed.<sup>229</sup> These posters would go on to only highlight the reality of who was in power. In short order, while the EMB was highly critical of colonists, it equally provided

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<sup>226</sup> “Sorting Manganese Ore” *Empire Online*.

<sup>227</sup> “Empire Builders” *Empire Online*, April 7, [https://www-empire-anddigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/47](https://www-empire-anddigital-co-uk.ezproxy.rowan.edu/Documents/Images/Empire%20Marketing%20Board%20Posters/47;);

<sup>228</sup> Leopold S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries*; William Roger Louis. *In the Name of God, Go!*; Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*; Lloyd Hastings. “Lloyd, Edward Mayow Hastings” *Archives Hub*; “Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958).” *AIM25 collection*.

<sup>229</sup> Stephen Howe. *Anticolonialism in British Politics*; Deborah Hughes, *Contesting whiteness*; Felicity Barnes, “Bringing Another Empire Alive?” *Journal of imperial and Commonwealth history*, 61–85; Ashley Kristen Bower, “Rebranding Empire” *PDXScholar*, 1-12.

a view that the British Empire was to be led and enjoyed by a white upper class. In this ambitious vision of reality, the white male was the center of importance in cultivating and keeping the Empire in running order. The white female housewife, meanwhile, was dedicated to buying Empire supplies and maintaining the home. Any who fell outside these classifications, even if they were white, were viewed by the EMB as merely constructors and servicemen for their great Empire. The prominence of this message normalized difficult-to-reverse attitudes relating to class, gender, and especially race amongst British subjects within Britain itself.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

#### Discouraging A Racial Culture

The British Empire has left a complex mark on human society and historical memory. From the early 17th century into the 20th, the Empire represented a myriad of different emotions for many different people. For some it was a source of pride, nationalism, and identity.<sup>230</sup> For others, the Empire equally represented a force of oppression, particularly in regard to the colonies.<sup>231</sup> While ideas revolving around the identity of the British Empire continually evolved throughout its history, the integral notions of Empire remained at its core.<sup>232</sup> During the Interwar Period (1918-1939), and following the reactions of the First World War, a growing societal consciousness once again looked inwards and attempted to identify what it meant to be a British citizen.<sup>233</sup> These changing social paradigms of a consumer driven class culture led to a reality that is more representative in some regards to the contemporary. However, imperial programs like the Empire Marketing Board (EMB), while created for economic purposes, also represented an unyielding effort to preserve the notions of Empire, and specifically *who* comprised it.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*. (Penguin, 2003).

<sup>231</sup> Antoinette M. Burton, *The Trouble with Empire*; Barbara Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*; Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*.

<sup>232</sup> John Darwin, *The Empire Project*; John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*; John Darwin, 'Imperialism and the Victorians' *English Historical Review*.

<sup>233</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge*; Martin Pugh, *"We Danced All Night"*; Susan Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich*; Richard Overby, *The Twilight Years*.

<sup>234</sup> Deborah Hughes, *Contesting whiteness*; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*; Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*; "Empire Marketing Board Collections." Manchester Art Gallery; "Empire Marketing Board Posters."

While the Imperial Economic Committee orchestrated facets of the EMB, individuals like Leo Amery and Stephen Tallents carried on and designed the propagandistic approach of the EMB.<sup>235</sup> Its efforts promoted a board that under its “Buy Empire” slogan circulated millions of posters that were loaded in terms of class, gender, and race. Subsequently, the EMB’s seven-year production of 222 unique images spread these attitudes throughout British society.<sup>236</sup> The EMB’s views reflected and acted on how the British Empire viewed its direct citizens, as well as regarded its colonial constituents.<sup>237</sup> In this sense, the Empire Marketing Board represents an important facet of 20th century culture, as well as historical attitudes belonging to imperialism and social evolution.

From its outset, the research conducted in this paper aimed to generate a conversation relating to the many instances of racially loaded imagery in consumer-based products and advertisements in contemporary America. In order to do this, a look at a historical example was required in order to examine how and why instances of this “culture” have so successfully infiltrated society. After examining the EMB posters, it is clear that the EMB’s racial themes were often equally intertwined with notions of class and gender. Yet, across all historical analysis on these prominent British images, little to no conversation exists regarding these adverts and their marginalizing content. This

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<sup>235</sup> The National Archives, “Records of the Imperial Economic Committee and Commonwealth Economic Committee.”; William Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!*; Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*.

<sup>236</sup> Karl Hack, “Selling Empire.” *OpenLearn*; “Sir Stephen George Tallents (1884-1958).” *AIM25 collection*; “The Manchester Guardian Weekly.” *Library of Congress*; David Meredith, “Imperial Images: The Empire Marketing Board, 1926-32.” *History Today*.

<sup>237</sup> David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*; Susan Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich*; Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*; Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*; John Darwin, “Imperialism and the Victorians” *English Historical Review*; John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*.

signifies that much like the American examples of “Aunt Jemima,” “Uncle Ben’s Rice,” or the Indigenous “Land O’ Lakes” person, British society accepted the presence of these images and the messages they conveyed.

For the EMB specifically, the appearance of these themes in government-produced propaganda highlights the attempt by the organization to cement racially charged ideas into the fabric of British society and culture at the time. In this sense, adverts like the American black Mammy in “Aunt Jemima” are no different in being a symbolic acceptance that these rules of inequality define reality. Ultimately, this argument had been to contend that the existence of products like the EMB posters had a significant effect, at least subliminally, in shaping perceptions and defining the concepts of class, gender, and race. Their existence as commonplace objects throughout everyday existence was a testament to the failure to develop conversations regarding these themes. Thus, in regarding the historical example of the EMB and its “Buy Empire” poster campaign, it is the responsibility of those in the contemporary present to recognize instances of controversial consumer imagery. In time, their continued presence marginalizes individuals along lines of class, gender, and race. To contextualize and acknowledge is to aid in preventing future generations from being burdened by the same misconceptions, as well as to account for the mistakes and effects of societies past, now, and into the future.

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